Puppet YOSHINO

SpiritNo.4
AstralDress-HermitType　Weapon-PuppetType[Zadkiel]

デート・ア・ライブ

DATE A LIVE

四糸乃パペット

橘公司
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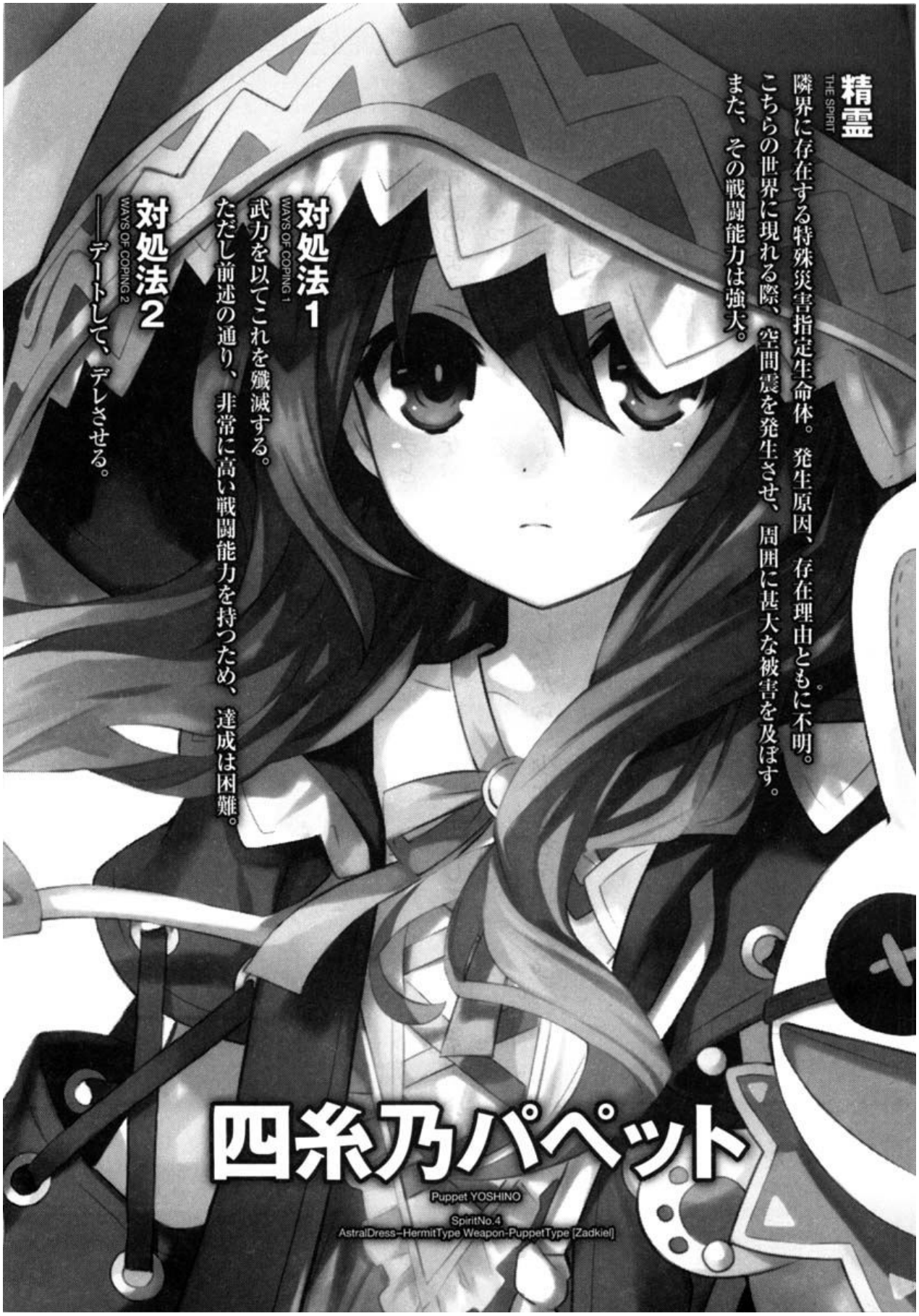


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Prologue: New Daily Life

"shidou! I baked something called a cookie!"

Her night-colored hair fluttered around her waist.

Her eyes sparkled like radiant crystals.

An impossibly beautiful girl said those words excitedly, while thrusting the container she held in her hands towards Shidou.

Itsuka Shidou was under incredible pressure as he turned his body and called the name of the girl.

"To-Tohka..."

"Umu? What!?"

With a carefree smile that could make flowers bloom, the girl —— Yatogami Tohka answered.

"……Well, about that…"

There were so many things he wanted to say, but he couldn't find the appropriate words in the face of her dazzling smile.

Unable to find something wrong with Shidou's expression, Tohka lifted the container's lid.

"More importantly Shidou, look at this!"

The many things inside were irregularly shaped and had burn marks everywhere. They could barely be called cookies.

Shidou and Tohka were in the same class, but in order to 'give the individual students a holistic education'... or so they were told, things like laboratory practicals and home economics were conducted in small groups of students.

In other words, only the girls had home economics today.

"What is that..."

"Umu, I had everyone teach me. I made this, so try eating it!"

...

Shidou felt a shiver run down his spine.

Not because of Tohka's cookies. . .

Putting it simply ——, all the other boys were watching him with glares of resentment.

But that wasn't completely unreasonable.

The fact that he was even able to enjoy the girl's homemade cookies made him the target of all the other guys jealousy.

What's more, it was said that right after transferring in, that Yatogami Tohka had exploded upwards in the (rumored) "Girl You Want Most as a Girlfriend" rankings.

The guy closest to him, just next to him, his friend Tonomachi Hiroto, had a hollow expression on his face, [fuck, fuck, FUCCCCCK... only a dead Itsuka is a good Itsuka] was grumbling something under his breath.

"Hm? What's wrong shidou? You’re not going to eat it?"

"I... Err... About that..."

Shidou said with a nervous twitch in his cheek. Tohka's shoulders began drooping little by little.

"Ugh... I see, it's because shidou is good at cooking..."

"—! I-It's not because of that. I-I’ll eat it!"

Shidou made up his mind, and took a cookie from the container.

And then, as he slowly lifted it to his mouth——

"...!?"

While his attention was elsewhere, a silver blur flew in a straight line in front of his

eyes.

The shot came from the hallway, and after breaking the cookie in Shidou's hand into small pieces, it pierced the wall.

"Wha-What...!?"

He shouted as his body instinctively stiffened.

Tracing back the trajectory of the silver blur, he saw a fork stuck into the wall. *Biiiin……* was the hum from its vibration. It had a simple design. Probably some utensil from the cafeteria.

"What, who threw that! That's dangerous, you know!"

Tohka shouted as she turned toward the hallway. Shidou did the same as his eyes turned in that direction.

[.....]

Standing over there as if she had just thrown something a few seconds ago, was a silent girl with her right hand stretched out.

Her skin was light colored, and she had hair that brushed the top of her shoulders. Her features were unusual, but graceful; she had no expression whatsoever on her face, giving off the impression of a lifeless doll.

"To-Tobiichi?"

"Nu."

Sweat was sliding down Shidou’s cheek, while Tohka had knitted her eyebrows together in displeasure.

This girl——Tobiichi Origami, slowly approached them while looking at both of them.

After stopping in front of Shidou, she lifted the lid of the container she was holding with her left hand and brought it out like how Tohka did a few moments ago.

"You don't have to put Yatogami Tohka's thing in your mouth. If you are going to eat something, then eat this—"

Inside the container, there were perfect cookies that were uniform in shape lined up in neat rows. It looked like a product straight from a factory line.

"E—Errrr……"

"Don't interfere! shidou is going to eat my cookies!"

While Shidou was having trouble responding, Tohka answered with a high-pitched voice.

However. Origami didn't flinch at all. Her expression didn't even twitch as she shook her head.

"The one who is interfering is you. You should leave immediately."

"What are you saying? Coming afterwards and acting all high and mighty!"

"The order in which we arrived does not matter. I cannot allow you to have him ingest your cookies."

"Wha— WHAT DID YOU SAY!?"

"You did not sufficiently wash your hands . What's more, while you were baking, you choked during the rising of the wheat flour, causing you to sneeze three times. This is unusually unhygienic."

"Wha……"

As if she got thrust into the void, Tohka’s eyes spun around.

For some reason, the moment Origami finished speaking, the surrounding male students started to get very noisy and excited. All eyes were on Tohka’s cookies.

But Tohka wasn't in any state to notice this influx of attention; *Grrr…* she clenched her fist.

"shi-shidou is strong, so that much is okay for him!"

"You appear to be unaware of the consequences —— Also, you messed up the proportions of the ingredients. I don’t think by skipping parts of the recipe, that your cookies can be considered finished."

"…?!"

When Origami said that, Tohka frowned, she looked at Origami and her own cookies.

"Wha… Why didn't you say anything when we were in class?"

"It wasn't my duty to point it out. ——In any case, the odds that my cookies would satisfy him are obviously higher."

"Shu-Shut up! There's no way cookies from someone like you could ever be delicious!"

Tohka shouted, while her eyes were spinning at an unstoppable speed. She took a cookie from Origami's container, and put it in her own mouth.

And then crispy sounds could be heard as she started chewing on it——

"Fuaa…"

Her cheeks were dyed the color of cherry blossoms, as she made an ecstatic expression. It seemed that the cookie was delicious.

But Tohka immediately changed her expression by shaking her head vigorously.

"Fu-Fuun, It wasn't such a big deal! If your cookie is like that, then mine is more delicious!"

"That is most unlikely. You should just gracefully admit your defeat."

"WHAT DID YOU SAY!?"

"What?"

"Ca-Calm down, both of you"

If they were left alone, a fight might break out; so Shidou went in between and created some distance between them, while saying "Maa, maa" in order to calm them down.

"Nu… then shidou, whose cookies do you want to eat?"

"Eh?"

And, faced with such words all of a sudden, Shidou made a idiotic sound.

Tohka and Origami, from both the left and right at the same time, brought out their containers.

"Well, shidou?"

"…"

Both Tohka and Origami had glints in their eyes that could pierce and pin down an enemy, and as they stared at Shidou, a sweat drop began to flow down his cheek.



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...Somehow, it was an atmosphere where no matter which one he ate, he would be killed.

Shidou followed what are his survival instincts— and took the cookies from both containers with both his hands, and put them in his mouth at the same time.

"Uh, y-yeah, they are great! Both of your cookies taste great!"

Tohka and Origami stared at shidou’s condition.

"Umu, my cookie was eaten a bit faster!"

"Mine was 0.02 seconds faster."

These words were both said at the exact same time.

"..."

"..."

And then, their faces quietly met.

"...Errrr"

Today was not the first time that the ambiance was like that.

Shidou felt like giving up or something like that, but jumped once again in between both of them.

And at that very moment, as expected from both sides, a huge amount of stress that was building in their fists was released and aimed at each other's vitals ——and ended up hitting the head and the belly of the poor boy who got between them.

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Chapter 1: Mission: Under One Roof

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Part 1

"...Haaa..."

Shidou let out a long and heavy sigh.

Walking upon the residential street as the sun slowly set, he dragged his legs and knees like an old man as he slowly moved forward.

Fatigue had set into his face, and somehow, even the fringe that was almost entirely covering his eyes had lost its luster.

Although he was only a 16-year-old boy.....he looked older than his age.

But, that was something to be expected!

"...Haaa."

He sighed one more time.

In the end, Tohka and Origami had started quarrelling, with Shidou having to intervene.

Plus, the conflict between the two of them wasn't new.

Although Tohka enrolled just a month ago into the same Raizen High School that Shidou was attending, the two of them (Tohka and Origami) would have competitions like this every single day.

——However, if it was simply about normal schoolgirls having some verbal quarrels, Shidou probably wouldn't be in such a critical condition.

"..."

Shidou recalled Tohka and Origami's forms from last month.

On one side was an evil [Spirit] that people thought as a disaster that would wreck the world.

On the other side was an Anti-Spirit Team wizard belonging to the JGSDF.

They were both girls with abnormal powers beyond that of humans.

For the time being, it was a normal human being, Shidou, who was acting as the mediator between these two girls.

"Seriously, can't those two just get along...?"

After saying that, Shidou lowered his head gloomily, realizing his own dumb remarks.

Until a month ago, both of their goals would have been to take each other's life.

Right now, in order to prevent Tohka's Spirit from going berserk, Origami and the rest of the AST openly avoided aiming for her life according to the [Orders]...Naturally, forming a good relationship was not going to be a simple task — that was obvious.

However, if this were to continue on, then Shidou's body wouldn't last, as one would expect from this situation.

Shidou then released his biggest sigh yet——

"Hmm...?"

Suddenly, he lifted his head up.

Unexpectedly, standing alone, he felt something cold drip on his neck.

"...Uwaa"

He said it like he was groaning, and a frown appeared on his face.

Before he knew it, the sky was getting covered by heavy gray clouds.

"Rain, huh? Hey, hey, didn't the weather forecast say it was going to be clear [fine day]?"

He ranted against the weather forecaster whose recent predictions have been off the mark.

And with an unbelievable timing that made it seem like this was planned from the beginning, *splash* *splash*, large water droplets started to stain the asphalt road.

"Argh, damn it..."

In a hurry, he raised his bag that he was holding onto above his head. He then hurriedly jogged to his house.

But, as if the rain was laughing at Shidou, it intensified in a blink of an eye.

"Hey, hey, you can't be serious..."

As he felt the cold sensation spread all over his uniform, Shidou frowned his eyebrows in annoyance.

Now that both of his parents were overseas on a business trip and the housework was thus left to Shidou, the latter, instead of thinking of matters such as "my clothes are sticking to my body, how uncomfortable" or "it'd be bad if I were to catch a cold", was rather concerned about whether his uniform would get dry the next day. A concern that is usually left to the housewife. Trying as much as he could to avoid getting his clothes wet, he ran toward the direction of his house even though he knew that it would be a futile effort.

However, immediately after turning right at a T-junction...

"Ah..."

In the middle of the downpour, Shidou suddenly stopped running.

He resisted the numbness in his legs. It wasn't like his legs were tired, or that he stopped caring about being drenched.

But because in front of him was --------

Instead of the water jewels that were falling from the sky, there was something else that bothered him that appeared from afar.

"A girl...?"

Shidou's lips spoke those words.

Yes, it was apparently a girl.

A mantle with a cute design, wrapped around her body, was forming a small shadow.

Her face was not visible, mainly because her hood with decorative rabbit ears was covering her entire face.

What was standing out the most was her left hand.

An amusing-looking rabbit-shaped puppet was equipped on it.

Such a girl, in an area which was empty of people...

pyon *pyon*

...was hopping around cheerfully in circles.

"What...?"

Shidou scrunched his eyebrows and watched the girl.

In his head, questions were being processed.

'Why was that girl not holding an umbrella but jumping up and down under the rain instead?'— No, that wasn't the question.

Why?

Why did he feel like as if his eyes were being stolen by that girl?

It was a question like that.

She was certainly wearing an eye-catching attire.

But no, it's wasn't about that.

Although he couldn't put it into words well, an uncomfortable sensation was overflowing in Shidou's mind.

It was an incomprehensible sensation. Plus, he recently felt something identical to that.

"..."

The cold rain clung against his skin as his clothes were wet, but he no longer cared about this discomfort.

He could only stare at the girl, who was dancing freely in the middle of the downpour of cold raindrops—

Sliiiiiiiiide!

"What...?"

He opened his eyes, bewildered by what just happened.

...The girl lost her footing.

Her face and stomach hit the ground hard, splashing the water puddle. Incidentally, the puppet on her left hand slipped off and flew forward.

And then, lying face-down on the ground, she had stopped moving.

"...H-Hey!"

Shidou in panic rushed over, and turned her over while holding her small body.

"A-Are you okay? Hey!"

For the first time, he was able to see the girl's face.

Her age should be around Shidou's sister's - Kotori's age. Her azure, fluttering hair was blue as the sea. Her soft lips had a pink color and she was a girl that looked like a beautiful French doll.

"...!"

And then, the girl opened her eyes, revealing her long eyelashes and her sapphire-like pupils.

"Ahh...I'm glad. Are you hurt somewhere?"

After Shidou said that, the girl's face turned ghastly pale and her eyes were spinning round and round, then she sprung up as if she was trying to escape from Shidou.

After that, she pulled a certain distance between them; her whole body started to faintly tremble. She looked at Shidou with fear in her eyes.

"...Err..."

Well, although it was simply in order to help her, he *did* suddenly touch her body, which might have been a careless act...despite that, Shidou was still a little shocked.

"Ab-About that. I was just——"

"—! Don't, come closer... please..."

"Eh?"

Just as Shidou made a step forward, the girl timidly said:

"Please...Don't hurt...me."

The girl followed with those words.

Did she see Shidou as someone who would harm her? It did seem that way, and she looked like a trembling little animal.

"Errr..."

And, to Shidou, who had no idea how to react to that, noticed the puppet that fell on the ground.

It should be something that previously fell off the girl's hand. He slowly bended over, picking it up, then presented it to the girl.

"Is this...yours?"

"...!"

The girl widened her eyes and wanted to rush towards Shidou, but suddenly stopped.

Although she wanted to retrieve that puppet, she made a face that expressed her fear of approaching Shidou, so she restlessly kept waiting for a better timing.

When Shidou saw the girl's state, he made a bitter smile. He then brought forward his hand that was holding the puppet to slowly shorten the distance.

"...!"

The girl twitched her shoulders ——maybe because she realized Shidou's intentions, she crept forward and approached slowly.

And then, she snatched the puppet from Shidou's hand and wore it on her left hand.

Suddenly, the girl started manipulating the puppet's mouth to open and close it.

"Yaahh——, sorry 'bout that bro. You're a life-saver—"

It was probably ventriloquism Shidou thought, as the rabbit made a strange high-pitched voice.

Tilting its head to the side, it looked at the girl's face as though it was questioning her...And as if it wanted to barge between Shidou and the girl, the rabbit puppet continued talking.

"———Hmmm hey—, when ya were waking me up, it looked like ya touched Yoshinon in lots of places. So, how was it hmmm? Be honest and tell us how— was it?"

"W-What...?"

The puppet made an impression as if it was laughing *kara* *kara*, clattering and moving its body accordingly.

"Oh you're kidding—— Don't pretend, ya lucky pervert...Well, for the time being, ya did help me up, so treat this as a special service that I.gave.you"

"...Haaa..., yeah."

After the puppet said those words, he gave back a bitter smile.

"Umm, well, see ya. Thanks, sir."

After the puppet said those words, the girl turned on her heels and then ran away.

"Ah—hey!"

Even though Shidou called to her, the girl did not respond.

She continued running and followed the bending road. Her figure instantly disappeared.

"What was...that?"

A few seconds had passed after watching the strange girl retreat. Shidou was still

standing at that same spot; he said that while scratching his cheek.

"...Ah."

And then he realized.

He didn't realize it when he was having his attention taken away from the girl, but —— Shidou's whole body was now totally dripping wet.

To top it off, because of the place where his knees touched the ground, his trousers were left magnificently dirty.

"Gosh——really..."

While wondering whether there was any more stain remover left at home, he disheveled and scratched his hair. Droplets of water left his hair and flew in every direction.

There was nothing he could do since he was already this wet. Thus, Shidou conveyed his current mood through a side, wanting to cheer up, and continued walking back home.

"Ahhh...I'm soaking wet."

A few minutes have passed since he started grumbling while walking.

"...Hm?"

After finally arriving in front of his house, as he inserted the key into the house entrance, Shidou slightly frowned.

After turning the doorknob, he pulled the door.

As expected, the door that was locked after he left opened without any resistance.

"——Kotori...that girl, she finally came home."

After taking a deep breath, Shidou's expression faintly stiffened.

Shidou's sister, Itsuka Kotori, attends the junior high school in the neighborhood, as a 13-year-old second year junior high school student.

And at the same time, she was also a commanding officer in the organization that

neutralized Spirits through peaceful means. <Ratatoskr>.

Since his sister had to help the Anti-disposal unit with some matters concerning the protection of the Spirit Tohka, she has not come home during the previous month. Shidou sighed as the image of Kotori's face came to his mind.

"Really."

Even though he understood that she was busy on Tohka's case, he still couldn't forgive her for sleeping outside of home without his consent.

Although she managed to attend school normally...as a brother, he had to lecture her for a while.

"Besides——"

Shidou gulped.

There were a lot of questions that Shidou had to ask Kotori no matter what.

Shidou went through events that were hard to believe just a month ago.

Kotori had an important role to play in them.

"..."

Although it's just meeting up with his sister, it was extremely heart throbbing.

Shidou strengthened his resolve and *eei!* slapped his own cheek. Then, he stepped foot into the house.

"——I'm home."

He took off the shoes and socks that were soaking wet because of the rain, rolled up the cuffs of his trousers before leaving wet footprints on the wooden floor as he walked.

From the corridor, he could hear sounds coming out from the television; there was no doubt that Kotori should be in the living room.

Shidou changed his direction to the bathroom and tip-toed towards it.

It was impossible to have a conversation when he was soaking wet anyway. It should

be better to enter the living room after drying his body and changing his clothes.

While holding his bag and socks with one hand, Shidou opened the bathroom's door like he always used to.

And—

"——!?"

In an instant, Shidou's body froze.

—In the bathroom was the figure of a girl.

Covered under the long night-colored hair were eyes that shone like crystals.

Even by adding the ten most grandiose adjective he could think of, they would not be enough to represent 10% of the beauty of this beautiful girl that gave off an overwhelming presence.

That girl was the only one in Shidou's memory.

It was the Spirit who was supposed to bring destruction to the world. But also the second year, class 4, student number 35 of the public school Raizen High School.

Yatogami Tohka was there.

—There was not a single cloth that was covering her body.

"To-Tohka…?"

Shidou muttered, dumbfounded.

Her limbs could be qualified as artistically beautiful. In an instant, Shidou's retina, optic nerve, brain cells, vibrated, became feverish and exploded.

She had breasts that could be entirely covered by his palm, a slender waist, and buttocks that looked soft. All the girls in the world would hold a reverence that would pierce through the boundaries of envy or jealousy to this charming yet mysterious naked body.

"…?!"

And finally, Tohka twitched her shoulders and turned her face towards his direction.

"Wha...shi-shidou!?"

"—! Ah, Er, No , this is a misunderstanding…! It's because—"

Although he didn't know what was wrong, those words automatically came off Shidou's mouth.

"E-Enough. Just get the hell out...!"

"Guefugh...!?"

Shidou took a magnificent right straight punch to his stomach, causing him to fly backwards, hit the wall behind, and fall hard on the floor, butt-first.

In a flash, *Slam!*, the bathroom door tightly closed.

"*Cough*, *cough*...gosh, that girl, she punched me seriously."

He said that while coughing violently, but his mind brought a little correction.

If Tohka were to punch him seriously, Shidou's body would already become a convenient container that could be detached into two parts.

Gradually, the pain inflicted on his stomach, mind, and retina started fading away altogether with the skin-color corrosion from the impact—— he also somehow took back his heart's composure.

Then, the bathroom door opened by a little bit. Tohka poked her face through the gap with her cheeks flushed bright red.

"...Did you see, shidou?"

"—!"

Shidou shook his head furiously at Tohka, who was staring him intensively.

...He actually did see a little, but if he were to be naively honest and tell her, this time his whole body would become able to fit into a suitcase.

Tentatively she understood that and came to an agreement, after Tohka made the sound [muu...], she fully opened the door.

Of course, Tohka has already put on her clothes.

But it wasn't the usual school uniform. Kotori probably lent it to her; it was Shidou's favorite dressing gown.

Due to her size being slightly bigger, her skin was showing from her collar until her collarbone, making it oddly erotic. It was a little troubling for Shidou to know where to place his eyes.

However, now wasn't the time to worry about that. He pointed his fingers at Tohka, and shouted.

"Wh-What are you doing over here, Tohka...!"

But Tohka tilted her head to the side, wondering what Shidou was talking about.

"What? Didn't you hear from your little sister? I think that, hum— it was something about some sort of training. I was told that I'll be staying here for the time being."

She said that nonchalantly.

"T-Training...!?"

After Shidou had brought his eyebrows together, he set his sight towards the corridor.

He then stood up, walked briskly, and slammed open the door in confusion.

"Kotori! What the hell is this about!?"

"Oh—"

When he did that, the little twin-tailed kid that was sitting on the sofa, watching the television, turned around, bringing those round eyes that looked like an acorn towards Shidou.

"O-Onii-chan. Welcome back!"

"H-Hey I'm home...Wait, that's not it!"

He replied normally without thinking, and then furiously shook his head.

"You brought Tohka here, didn't you...? Oh, and training, what on earth is this about...!?"

"Now, now... Calm down, calm down."

"How can I *calm down*!? W-Why did you bring Tohka here...? Isn't she supposed to go home with Reine-san as usual!"

"Eh? Well—about that—"

Kotori stretched a finger in the direction of the kitchen.

"Oh...?"

Shidou brought his eyes towards the direction that Kotori was pointing at—and again, he stiffened.

"...Ah, I'm coming in."

That's what she said.

There was a woman with an excessively sleepy face, arriving at the dining table that was separating the living room and the kitchen. She was adding many sugar cubes into a steaming hot cup.

—She was Murasame Reine, the analysis officer of [Ratatoskr] and also the assistant homeroom teacher in charge of Shidou's class.

Incidentally, she was not wearing her usual military uniform, a white robe, but the pajamas of Shidou's mother while having a towel hang around her neck. Her hair was somehow a little moist.

"Re-Reine-san? What are you doing...?"

"...Fumuu?"

After reflecting on Shidou's question for a short while, she scratched her head and said:

"...Ah, I'm sorry. Am I using too much sugar?"

"No, that's not the problem!"

He couldn't help but shout.

Reine definitely put enough sugar cubes in that cup to worry about getting

hyperglycemia, but that is not important now.

To calm down his own heartbeat, Shidou lightly patted his chest and then continued, saying:

"What is this about? Shouldn't Tohka be currently living in <Fraxinus>?"

Tohka, who was currently being protected by [Ratatoskr], should now be living in the isolated area, which also happened to be a part of the airship interior the organization owned called <Fraxinus>. It was said that she also commuted to school from there.

Though she had her powers sealed, she was previously known as a Spirit that bringing destruction to the world.

It was made this way so that if, per chance, anything were to happen, immediate actions could be taken. Not only there was that, in order to conduct a regular inspection efficiently, it seemed a strong seal was placed in that isolated area which also had rooms prepared.

Therefore, when Tohka finished school, she should have returned with Reine to <Fraxinus>...

"...Aah, that's right. I should've given you an explanation."

Reine said that while rubbing her eyes, that had dark circles around them.

"...But, before that."

"Before that...?"

"...Wouldn't it be better if you change your clothes first? The floor is getting wet."

"Ah."

After being reminded of that, Shidou let out a brief sound.

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Part 2

"...So? What is this all about?"

Shidou, having changed into his casual clothes, set his sights towards Reine and Kotori, who were sitting on the other side of the table.

These three people were currently on the second floor of the Itsuka residence, in Kotori's room.

The space was about the size of six tatami mats. The room was filled by pink dressers, a bed, and there was a crowd of fancy accessories and dolls that were placed everywhere.

He originally wanted to continue the conversation in the living room, but due to some sensitive topics that should not reach Tohka's ears, they relocated here.

Incidentally, Tohka was under a trance, watching rebroadcasted anime in the living room. She should be quiet for the next 20 minutes.

"Well—about this."

Kotori poked her soft cheek with her finger, pushing it upward.

"From today onwards, Tohka will be temporarily staying here in our house!"

Then, puffing her chest out with pride, she made an innocent smile.

"That is why I'm asking how it turned out to be like thiiiiiiiiiiiiis!"

".....Now, please calm down, Shintarou."

As Shidou was shouting, Reine spoke out.

Whether or not it was a matter of course, she had still mistaken his name.

"It isn't Shintarou, but Shidou."

".....Ah, you're right. I take it back. Sorry about that, Shin."

"....."

It was not taken back. It just became a nickname.

He couldn't help but think it was on purpose but...as he looked closely at Reine's face, he couldn't help but think that she might have really mistaken his name.

However, Shidou could not corner her about his name any more than this.

".....The reasons can be more or less classified into two parts."

Reine started speaking with a seemingly calm voice.

".....The first part is about——who will continue to take care of her afterwards."

"Take care of her afterwards...what do you mean?"

".....Shin. Last month, you kissed Tohka and sealed away her powers, right?"

"...Ugh, Ye-Yeah..."

Shidou lowered his head in defeat.

At the same time, the feeling from that time resurfaced, and his face reddened a little.

"Ah—Onii-chan's face is getting red- How cute~~"

"Sh-Shut up!"

Kotori, who seemed to enjoy that, said it cheerfully from the depths of her heart. Shidou averted his sight awkwardly.

"...Well, that's fine, but there's a problem...There's currently something like an invisible connection running between Shin and Tohka."

"Connection? What does that mean?"

"...To put it into simpler words, when Tohka's mental states becomes unstable, there's the chance that the spiritual power that is sealed within your body will reflux."

"Wha...?"

Shidou's body froze in fear.

——So the seal that was placed on Tohka's spirit powers would let them get back to her...?

Does it not mean that Tohka will once again have the power to slice heaven and earth in a single swing?

If by any chance that was the case—— this was a possibility that can make people shiver just by thinking about it.

"......As you know, Tohka is now living in the isolated area of <Fraxinus>."

Whether she was aware or not of Shidou's panicked state, Reine continued talking in a soft manner.

"......Although we are usually monitoring Tohka's condition.....Somehow, when she is on <Fraxinus>, the levels of stress measured are higher compared to the levels when she is at school."

"I-Is that so?"

"......Yes. Moreover, it seems she doesn't like the regular inspections that occur twice a day. Although it is within her tolerance for now, it would be hard even for an expert to say whether we could continue on like this—— And that's why—"

Reine touched her chin with her fingers.

"—considering that the results gained from the inspections have been stable, we will be changing Tohka's living quarters to outside of <Fraxinus> for a while." "Ha-Haa...is that so."

"......Ahh. Due to these circumstances, it has been decided that Tohka will be staying in this house for the time being while the special Spirit residential building is being built."

"Please wait."

Shidou put his right palm on his forehead, his face twitching.

"......What's wrong?"

"Wh-Why does it have to be *my* house...?"

Reine made a small groan at Shidou's question.

"……Well, to put it bluntly— when she is with you, Tohka's mental state will be at its most stable condition."

"Eh..."

As soon as those words were said, he held his breath.

"……That is to say— while this is hard for us to judge, Tohka hasn't put her trust on any human other than you. Whether it's me or Kotori, although we had many opportunities to be in contact with her—— that wasn't the case ……Firstly, even if it's by a little, we will secure a safe place. Then, we will test whether if Tohka is capable of living a normal life."

"...I see..."

Shidou wiped the sweat on his forehead.

Certainly, after the explanation, everything seemed to be clear to Shidou.

What more— well, he was told that Tohka trusted him.

...He didn't hate it.

But, as if he was going to change his mind, he lightly shook his head. This wasn't a request he could easily accept. As if he was trying to dodge it, he asked a new question that was directed at Reine.

"So...What is the other reason?"

"...Ahh, this one is more straight-forward —Shin, it is for your training."

"..."

The words that were mentioned when he had changed his clothes a while ago were repeated.

Training. With that single word, many unpleasant memories surfaced in his mind.

"Oh yeah, that topic did turn up...But, there is no need for any more training right?"

"...Huh? Why is that?"

"Why is that...'cos the the Spirit's power has already been sealed..."

When Shidou said that, Reine turned into a wobbly state which made her swing her head to the side.

"……Who told you that *Tohka is the only Spirit*?"

"Eh...? What do mean...by—"

"……It means exactly what I said. A special trait of the calamity designated creatures —also known as Spirits—are causing spacequakes. But Tohka isn't the only one. At this current time, we have confirmed that there are other ones beside her."

"Wha——"

Shidou suddenly felt like his heart was getting pulled and squeezed.

—The Spirits. So Tohka wasn't the only one?

Wondering whether it was nervousness or fear, whirlpools were forming in the bottom of his stomach. It was an emotion hard to describe. The constant trembling that his whole body was releasing could be felt from his hands and legs, all the way to his fingertips.

But Reine didn't care about the stiffened up Shidou, and went on.

"……Shin. We want you to continue taking on the role of conversing with the Spirits. That's what the training is about."

"...Y-You're kidding—"

Then, just as he shouted and struck his thigh...

"——Huh?"

Kotori, who has been quietly listening to the conversation, raised her small voice.

Before anyone noticed, the color of the ribbon that had been tying her hair in twintails had changed from white to black.

"——!"

...Shidou felt like he had already seen this before. Kotori was now in Commander Mode.

"You don't want to, Shidou? Are you saying that you hate dating Spirits and making them fall for you?"

Her tone was totally different from a few seconds ago. While giving off adult-like vibes, Kotori had spoken.

—Right.

[Ratatoskr] proposed to use this method to subdue the Spirits, which is through peaceful and non-violent means—

That is for Shidou to get in good terms with the Spirits, and then seal the powers in his own body— even to put it in words, this was a stupid thing to do.

"Uh, o-of course I don't!"

Shidou having said that, Kotori bent her body slightly forward while opening her lips.

"Geez— If that's the case, then there's nothing we can do anymore."

"Ah...?"

"We can either quietly watch the world getting messed up by spacequakes or patiently wait for a miracle-like event by letting the AST kill the Spirits. It'll probably be one of those two."

"...!"

After being told that, Shidou was left speechless.

It was not like he has forgotten about it— but having that reality facing him once again made his heart struck by a prickly pain.

The Spirits, who exist in the alternate dimension that is said to be the neighboring world, would rarely appear in *this* world.

On these occasions, there would be a large fluctuation with the walls between the dimensions, causing a phenomenon known as a spacequake to occur.

Whether it was on a large or small scale– as long as Spririts appear in an area, the latter would be absurdly destroyed, as though a bomb had exploded.

After that, the Spirits would be known as dangerous existences, and people would be attempting to eliminate them by any means with the help of members of the JGSDF's Anti-Spirits Team's, the AST's, military powers.

"The unusual power that can seal the ones of the Spirits away— you are the only person in the whole world that holds that. And yet, you're saying that you don't want to do this. Doesn't it mean that there is no possible alternative anymore?"

"...Wh-What's with...that..."

Shidou looked as if he was in pain.

A heavy responsibility was put on him without him knowing. His stomach started to ache due to the heaviness of his duty.

But—back to the original topic...

There were still a lot of things that Shidou had to confirm no matter what.

"—Kotori."

"What is it?"

As if she somehow managed to guess what Shidou was about to ask, Kotori leisurely replied.

"...First of all, will you tell me what on earth is [Ratatoskr]? When did you enter into such an organization? And—about my power, what on earth is it?"

Yes. That was what Shidou always wanted to know.

Due to Kotori always being away from home, he wasn't able to ask her that

Kotori sighed, and took out her favorite food—a Chupa Chups—from her pocket. Only after unwrapping it and putting it in her mouth that she began to talk.

"—I guess you're right. This is also the right opportunity to tell you, so let me get straight to the point."

After saying that, she let the back of her body lean on the cushion behind her.

"[Ratatoskr] was formed by volunteers...Well, to put it simply, it was something like a kind of nature conservation association— And of course, its existence was not publicly announced."

"Nature conservation association huh..."

Somehow, he felt like it was something that didn't make sense, and because of that he hesitated to interrupt the talk. As if he wanted her continue talking, he continued making only agreeable responses.

"Yup...What's more, the main goal and the reason for forming [Ratatoskr]— is to shelter the Spirits and to provide them with a blessed and happy life.....Well, it also seems like there are corrupt people in the biggest leadership group, the ROUNDS, that want to do something like obtaining the enormous powers of the Spirits."

"Ah...? Wasn't it to prevent the spacequakes?"

"Well, of course there is that. But that is a secondary goal. If that's how you see it, then we are the same as the AST."

"...Hmm, well, I guess you're right. So...such an organization exists. When and why did you become the Commander there? I had no idea of what you were."

He said those words in displeasure.

Although he didn't have any intent to say 'Don't keep secrets from me', this was something important— that is to be hiding a secret like being involved in something that can endanger her life. He was a little unsatisfied as an older brother.

Having guessed his feelings, Kotori snorted.

"I was appointed as the commander of the combat unit of [Ratatoskr]...around five years ago, I think."

"Five years ago.....Huh— Wait, WHA...!?"

After Shidou finished making simple calculations in his head— he lifted his tilted head back to its normal position.

"Stop spouting that crap. Five years ago...weren't you just an 8-year-old girl?!"

Shidou was hit by a feeling of disbelief.

Even though it was not an ordinary organization, still, to have a girl that is about as old as an elementary third year student be its commander, that is just plain crazy.

"Well, during those few years, it was something like training. In reality, it was only recently that I have taken the command post."

"N-No, it isn't about that. Why would they take a small girl in the first place—"

"Well, how do I put it? [Ratatoskr] realized that I possess an overflowing intelligence."

"How can I be convinced by something like that!"

"Even if you tell me that, nothing can be done since it's the truth. Why can't you just believe in the words of your little sister more obediently? Do you think you will look smart if you doubt other people's word?"

...Her behavior was completely different from the usual cute Kotori's. Sweat was drooping down Shidou's cheek.

".....That double personality of yours, is it [Ratatoskr's] fault?"

After Shidou said that, Kotori snorted.

"That's simplistic and rude. Think a little before you say anything. In the first place this is—"

"This is...?"

"....."

After Kotori looked at Shidou with a difficult expression, she swung her head away and ignored Shidou's words.

"—That matter isn't important. Right now, we are talking about [Ratatoskr]. Plus, about five years ago, some incidents happened and became the turning point for the organization."

"Hey, don't just change the—"

But, Shidou words were stopped halfway.

It was because Kotori put her fingers around the rod of the Chupa Chups she was

eating, took it out of her mouth and pointed it at Shidou.

"—Due to the discovery of the boy who can seal the Spirits' power with a kiss, [Ratatoskr] thereafter has positively shifted its objective towards protecting Spirits."

"Wha..."

Shidou's eyebrows were deformed in shock.

"An-And that boy is...me, right?"

"Yes."

Kotori nodded, and once again, put the Chupa Chups back into her mouth.

And as for Shidou, things were chaotic in his head. Having all kinds of information being given to him in one shot, it became impossible to process all of it.

"Wait, please wait a moment...First of all, why was I provided with this kind of power?"

"Dunno."

"Huh...? N-Nononono. Don't try to deliberately mystify that matter."

"I'm not deliberately mystifying it. I really don't know. *Through the medium of a kiss, it can rob and take away the Spirit's power, and seal it safely inside one's body.* I only know that you had this ability. As for the reason why you have these powers, I personally have no idea."

"Th-Then, how did you know that I have this kind of power! And five years ago! What on earth happened back then!"

The moment Shidou said that while scratching his head...

Kotori averted her gaze to the ground.

"..."

After seeing that she seemed different than usual and took on an expression of grief, Shidou was shocked.

She looked as if she was feeling deep sorrow. As if she recalled some painful

memories.

——It looked like she felt remorse because of something wrong that could not be undone.

On that— face.

"Ko-Kotori...?"

When Shidou called her name, Kotori came back to earth, and her shoulders slightly trembled.

"Eh—yeah, it was discovered through [Ratatoskr]'s observation device. That's how it was. And I also managed through the same method."

She was completely different compared to her usual Commander Mode. Plus, Kotori said those vague words in an evasive manner.

But he...for some reason, he didn't have the heart to pursue this subject any longer.

"A-Anyway—"

After Kotori coughed and cleared her throat, she pointed at Shidou with her finger.

"Right now, the most important information is that [you have the powers to do something about the Spirits]. Got it?! So make your choice— From now on, will you accept or not to capture the Spirits' heart for us?"

"..."

Shidou pressed his lips together in displeasure. It was a question that has quite a bad disposition.

Shidou was the only one that could seal the powers of the Spirits.

If Shidou doesn't do this, the Spirits— the thing is, their existence and circumstances are the same with Tohka's, so Shidou has thoughts of wanting to save them. Every time they come over to this side of the world, the AST would attack them.

Even though it's not the intention of the girl to destroy this world.

Having a one-sided conclusion, deciding they are a disaster and aiming for their lives.

And there's—— that problem with the spacequakes.

If the Spirits powers aren't sealed, someday again, there was a chance that the large-scale great disaster level of that Eurasia might happen again.

Shidou made a big sigh and scratched off some of his hair.

"...Give me a little time, to think about it."

"—Well, that is okay for now."

Kotori said that with a sigh, and directed her gaze towards Reine, who was sitting beside her.

"Well then Reine, the preparations."

"...Okay, leave them to me ...Or rather, everything is already complete."

After Reine said that while wobbling her head, Kotori whistled.

"As expected. You work fast."

"...Preparations? What is that about?"

A bad feeling resurfaced when those two made that restless conversation. Shidou asked them while sweat was dripping down off his cheek.

When he did that, Kotori replied like it was a natural thing to do.

"Eh? Therefore, Tohka's room preparation was already decided. She is going to use the second floor's guest room."

"Wai-Wait a minute! Didn't you say you will let me think for a bit!"

"Yes, that's why you shouldn't worry about things here. Take your time and think."

"Don't speak the impossibleeeeee!!!!!"

When Shidou shouted, Kotori blocked her ears in relief.

"You're noisy. Either way, until the specially designated residential area is finished, we have no choice but to let Tohka stay here. By the time you'll make your decision, it'll be too late for training."

"Even If you say something like that...I think there's something wrong with having a young girl and boy of the same age living in the same house..."

As Shidou's face was beet red when he said that, Kotori coldly laughed at him.

"If you were able to make such *mistakes*, we wouldn't have any hardships at all."

"Guh..."

It was a little saddening that he couldn't deny it.

"But, even so...!"

And, as Shidou was still clinging onto opposition, from Shidou's back—the door that installed in Kotori's room entrance, *Kachin*, opened.

"...!"

His shoulder twitched, and then turned around.

While he was wondering how long has she been there, from the corridor Tohka gave him an anxious look.

"...shidou. As I thought, I can't? I...can't stay here?"

"...Uh."

With eyebrows that are shaped in the form of a ノ乀, Tohka looked over with sad eyes, causing Shidou to be left speechless.

...If there was any human that can say no in this situation, he would really like to meet him.

Shidou, made a looooooong sigh.

"...I-I understand..."

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Part 3

"…So, speaking of this training, what is it? What on Earth are you going to make me do?"

Shidou, after having his head forcefully dragged around about three hours ago—

After finishing his dinner, Shidou asked Kotori, who was sitting on the living room sofa.

The only ones in the Itsuka family living room were Shidou and Kotori.

After all that, Reine returned to <Fraxinus>. As for Tohka, after eating dinner, she proceeded towards the guest room. The accessories she used while staying at the isolated area of <Fraxinus> were delivered a little while ago. It seems she was unpacking her luggage now.

"Nothing in particular, it’s OK to do nothing."

Kotori, who had her hair tied up with the black ribbon, said that while moving her lips, which had a finished rod hanging from her mouth (of course, it was not tobacco, but a Chupa Chups).

"Huh…? What do you mean? After saying all that stuff about training."

"Un——, speaking accurately, the theme this time is to lead an ordinary lifestyle…I think."

"Ah?"

"Basically, your training, based on the assumption that you will be dating all the Spirits from now on, is to manage to have a conversation with girls without being nervous."

"…Ah, now that I think about it, you did say something like that."

After he recalled having to train with galge last month and to undergo training in the art of flirting— his cheek twitched.

"This time, we will be making the best of 'living together with a girl' as live combat

training. The point is that even if you suddenly encounter a chest tightening situation with a girl, you will stay calm and be able to behave gentlemanly and act accordingly."

"…Haa."

"That's why Shidou, during the time that you are living together with Tohka, no matter the kind of naughty event that will happen, it will be best if you can cope with the situation without being flustered."

"Wha…What's up with that…"

Shidou's brow formed a grand wrinkle, and he moaned.

Suddenly a new question floated into his mind.

"…Speaking of which, why must I seduce the Spirits in the first place? You can just seal the Spirits' powers by kissing, right? In that case, there's no need to abruptly strike――"

"Oh my, is forcing yourself on others what you prefer, Shidou? Good luck in not having your name appear in the morning newspapers."

"I won't be in them!"

As Shidou shouted, Kotori shrugged her shoulders in a relieved manner.

"――It's useless. If the Spirits don't open their hearts to Shidou, they won't let you seal their powers completely."

"Is-Is that so…?"

"Yes, and I don't particularly mean that they have to be deeply in love. At the very least, it will be hard if they don't trust you enough for them to not refuse the kiss. That's why Reine monitors the Spirits individually on their mood and positive feelings."

"Ha,Haaa…"

The more he hears about this, the harder it is to understand what his ability is.

"…Hm?"

And— Shidou twisted his head.

For Kotori, it seems she began moving her lips normally.

"…I see, I understand. Un…later…"

If he looked closely, in Kotori's right ear, he could see she was wearing a small intercam.

"Kotori? Who are you talking to?"

"——Aah, it's nothing. Don't worry about it—— more importantly Shidou."

Thus, Kotori jumped off the sofa and stood up.

"I want to go to the toilet."

"Huh? Why don't you just go then."

"From what I saw a while ago, the light bulb is out. Could you go on ahead and change it?"

"—? Ahh…I don't mind."

While Shidou was thinking that Kotori was being very suspicious, he pulled out a spare light bulb from one of the shelves.

He then took a stool meant for this type of work and headed towards the toilet.

And then, after he put the stool on the floor he proceeded to open the door—

"—!?"

His posture froze accordingly.

But it was a natural thing to do. In any case— it was because his guest was in there, on the toilet.

"Wha…shidou!?"

Tohka was currently sitting there with her panties below her knees.

"To…To-To-To-To-To-To-To-Tohka…!? What are you doing over——"

Shidou squeezed out that voice, while he felt his pulse rate suddenly accelerate.

Weird. The toilet door was not locked.

In addition, the light bulb which Kotori said was out— was shining brightly and dazzlingly. Incidentally, the light switch that was installed beside the door was off.

This was absurd, for someone that entered abruptly to be able to see through this ploy.

"Tha-That's my line!, hurry up and close it!"

With Tohka's cheeks turning beet red, at the same time as having one hand pulling down her gown's hem, she violently grabbed the toilet paper that was installed on the wall, and then threw it at Shidou's face with all her might.

"Goah…!?"

Although it was just soft toilet paper, but if it was thrown abruptly, it would still have a decent amount of impact.

Shidou emitted a groan, and collapsed facing up on that spot.

*Roll**Roll**Roll*……and, the toilet paper that had commenced a kamikaze [2A 1] attack on Shidou's nose drew a white line along the corridor.

"Wha-What happened…?"

And while Shidou was gazing at the ceiling, Kotori appeared overhead.

"That was pathetic. Even though I just told you not to panic and get flustered."

Because of her daunting pose as Shidou laid on his back, her underwear was fully exposed. Well, even if it was Shidou, because it was his sister's panties, he was not panicking.

"…Kotori. This is your fault…"

As Shidou said that, Kotori took the Chupa Chups by the stick, popped the candy out of her mouth and held it up beside her lips.



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…What happened was that they had estimated when Tohka would enter the toilet, before sending Shidou to attack. And what's more, they politely played with the door lock and the light switch.

"——Shidou’s condition is always being monitored by the <Fraxinus>. Then the crew and AI will judge each of Shidou’s corresponding success rates individually— And of course this time, it’s a failure."

After saying that, Kotori showed Shidou something that she was hiding behind her back.

"Ah…?"

It was a small-sized radio.

Kotori inserted a battery into it, and matched the frequency. As she did that——

"—This world, it is filled with deceit. The adults are all rotten. We can't be like that. Show them the power — the overflowing wonder. We can’t stop our legs that will face the future—"

…It was a poem he had heard from somewhere being blandly recited out loud.

Yes. It was something that Shidou wrote when he was in middle school.

"Gy…Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahh!?"

Shidou screamed as if he had ceased functioning, pulled out the radio's battery and dropped it.

"Even if you do that it's useless. After all, it is already being aired."

"Wha…!?"

Shidou’s face was completely dyed red.

"It is the Penalty's successor from last time. It will be a problem if you don't take it seriously just because this is training—— well, relax. As long as you don’t get it all wrong, something like revealing the author's name will not happen."

"Isn't that saying that if I get all of it wrong, it will be revealed!"

"That's why I'm saying that before it happens so you can get used to it. It's not like I told you to make her get all lovey-dovey. No matter how nervous you get, if you calm down and are able to act correspondingly, you pass."

"Tha-That's unreasonable…"

The galge was much better. The training this time had a degree of difficulty that was too high for Shidou, who had no immunity.

"Spe-Speaking of which, didn't you say we shouldn't make Tohka's mental stability even worse…!?"

"Ahhhh, well that's not a problem. There are a lot of things that will cause her emotions to swing. In these sorts of events, the chances that the Spirit powers reverse back to her are very low."

"Bu-But even so…"

And, while Shidou was saying that, from his back a - *screech* - sound echoed.

Tohka opened the toilet door by a bit, and half of her fully red face peeked out.

"To-Tohka…?"

Even though it was Kotori's fault in the first place, but for someone who was caught doing something like peeping just a moment ago, it was hard to face each other. Shidou averted his gaze and said in a soft voice.

"So-Sorry…it wasn't on purpose. Please forgive me…"

After he said that, Tohka, with cheeks that were blushing in embarrassment, pointed at the white line along the corridor that she was focusing on.

"…I will forgive you…so erm, some…how, could you please get me the paper?"

"Ah…"

Which reminded him that the toilet paper that was meant for emergency use might be out.

Shidou took the toilet paper that fell on the corridor with his hands, rolled it back and handed it to Tohka.

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Part 4

"Shidou, it seems that the bath is ready, so go on ahead."

What kind of traps did you set up this time…?

Shidou braced himself, when Kotori threw those words at him, it was around 8 P.M.

"…The bath, huh."

Shidou answered in a hollow voice, and was creeping his head into the living room.

While Kotori was lying down, she was holding a controller from a game console connected to the television.

As expected, Tohka's presence— was absent.

Yes. Just a while ago, when Shidou stepped away for a few minutes, Tohka's figure had disappeared.

Kotori said that she went to go get something from her room…having reached this stage, Shidou wasn't that naïve to believe that.

"…No, I'm okay with taking it afterwards. How about you going ahead, Kotori?"

"……"

Twitch

Kotori, who was enjoying swaying along in sync with the game's BGM, halted her fingers for a moment. Shidou did not overlook it.

"I'll pass. Right now is the good part."

! She said that with a poker face while looking at the screen.

—Shidou was certain of this.

This is a trap set by Kotori.

While Shidou wasn’t there, they made Tohka enter the bath, same as with the toilet incident just moments ago, and they would then have Shidou barge in. They were probably planning to produce a happy and embarrassing situation.

A commander with many stratagems in her head like Itsuka Kotori would never overlook an opportunity such as the classic bath scenario.

However, Shidou had already experienced the bathroom incident when he returned home. There was no way he would fall for it a second time.

While making a small shrug with his shoulders— it was time to play his prized, hidden card.

"Oh well, don't be like that— especially today, since we are going to use the bubble bath melt."

"—!?"

In an instant. Kotori’s twin tails twitched and ruffled up.

Everyone in the Itsuka family have the opportunity to enjoy the carbonated gas when bubble bath melt were to be used. However, only the first person to take a bath was assigned to put them.

As such, Kotori had almost never missed this role before.

"……"

"……"

A moment of silence after an evening meal.

If a person that doesn’t know anything sees this, they would probably see a quiet scene of a brother and sister.

But— right now, severe psychological warfare (?) had unfolded between these two.

-*Well, what are you going to do now, Kotori?*

Right now in Shidou’s mind; Kotori’s impregnable castle was being assaulted by bubble bombs, a downright surreal scene unfolded.

Kotori, in a calm manner, moved her toes. Shidou was sure of his victory, and

raised the sides of his lips.

—Fu,hahahahahaha! Don’t look down on me, you little brat. For I, Itsuka Shidou, have been your brother for many years, it isn't just for show.

But, for a brief moment, Kotori replied with a shaky voice,

"He…Heeeeeeeeeee, Yes……That's nice……Shidou, go on in...first."

"Wha…"

From that unexpected response, Shidou raised his eyebrows— No matter how much she is in Commander mode, there was no way Kotori could fight back against the magical powers of the bath bubbles!

…And, looking closely, Kotori’s shoulders were trembling, he understood that by seeing that and from seeing her right hand tightly gripping her left hand.

"……"

She was completely holding it in.

And-at that time,

"Kotori, sorry to make you wait. Well, it’s a challenge!"

From behind a voice echoed, Shidou turned around in shock.

Over there was, Tohka standing there while holding something that looked like a blanket.

"Tohka?!"

"Nu, what's wrong shidou? Making such a weird face."

"N-No…where did you go?"

"Un. Kotori asked me to play a game with her, but today was a little cold after all. So I went to find something that can cover my knees from the inside of my room."

"…Wha-"

From Tohka words, Shidou reflexively staggered. He felt like his sight began to

distort and blur.

-Was Kotori speaking the truth? Shidou, had gotten himself all worked up for nothing…!?

"…I'm going to take— a bath…"

For some reasons it felt like he had lost. Shidou exited the living room all wobbly.

"—? shidou, what's wrong?"

"…I wonder."

The voices of these two were heard behind him as he left the corridor. He prepared clothes and a bath towel randomly, before opening the changing room door of the bathroom.

"……"

Just in case, he knocked on the bathroom door before opening it.

"…What, there really is no one."

He let out a sigh of relief, and quickly took off his clothes before entering the bath. The moment he grabbed the bubble solution in his hand— he suddenly felt like he had done something bad to Kotori.

He thought of letting Kotori use it tomorrow instead. He tossed in the ordinary bathwater additive that doesn't produce bubbles into the bathtub.

And then he quickly washed his body before sinking his body into the bath dyed in a milky white color.

"Fuu~~"

A long and slender sigh. Many repeated echoes resounded off the bathroom walls and returned back into his ears.

"Today was again…Tiring……"

He sunk his shoulders into the hot bath, and let out another sigh.

From the pores of his body, it felt like his entire body's fatigue melted away.

Shidou, took his time and slowly closed his eyelids.

…And now, he wondered how much time past.

"-Fun,fufufufu-n,fufu-n~"

The sounds of someone humming, brought Shidou out of his daze.

"Ah…? What…?"

Shidou rubbed his drowsy looking eyes, and faced towards the direction where the humming was coming from—

"—!"

His body stiffened, and he cursed himself for letting his guard down.

But that was natural. Because right now, facing the glass that separates the bathroom from the changing room, he saw the faintly visible figure of a black haired girl.

"Thi-This was your aim huh, Kotori—!"

Shidou groaned while holding back his stomach.

Making it look like it was the same pattern as last time and then using a surprise attack.

It wasn't to have Shidou move towards where Tohka was, but the reverse.

While being simple, it was an effective strategy. Because currently, Shidou has no place to run.

"I've been deceived. Kotori—!"

Right now in Shidou's mind; Kotori was wearing sunglasses while making an inappropriate laugh and saying, [Because you're a little boy] while sipping on a glass of whiskey. That scene floated across his mind.

Having finished removing her cloths, Tohka put her hands on the bathroom door.

"—!"

Shidou in confusion, and without thinking, dove into the bathtub and shut the lid

before he could be found.

And then as if in an appearance of someone who was passing by, the sound of the door opening was heard.

Next, with a *rattling* sound, the lid of the bathtub was removed. And then-

"Tou!"

Splash!

And, without checking the inside of the bathtub, Tohka vigorously jumped into the bathtub.

Splashing into hot water- and at the same time, Shidou felt something soft land his on stomach.

"Nu?"

And finally, Tohka felt something was unusual.

Thus…Shidou could no longer continue holding his breath and broke from the surface of the milky water with he made 'a good day pose' on his face.

"Y-Yo."

"……"

After that in just a few seconds.

"——!?"

Tohka, face was glowing as red as a tomato, and raised a scream that doesn’t sound like a voice.

"Ca-calm down, Tohka…!"

"-! You idiot! D-Don’t come out…!"

Tohka grabbed Shidou's head with all her strength, and plunged him down into the water.

Naturally, Shidou who didn’t take a good breath, didn't have sufficient oxygen in his

lungs.

"—! ……!"

And then having been locked in this grapple in the bathtub for a while.

Shidou finally lost consciousness, *plop*…and began floating in the bathtub.

Somewhere in his mind; Kotori said [yes, it’s a No], he felt like he again heard a long voice from the radio— but there was nothing Shidou could do.

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Part 5

"That was a comp—completely……bad experience."

He somehow brought back his consciousness. Shidou after coming out of the bath, washed the accumulating pile of dishes in the sink and prepared tomorrow's rice. Finally returning to his own room— he was completely tired out.

The clock hand turned to 11 O'clock.

The good children, both Tohka and Kotori, were already sleeping in their respective rooms.

Although for a healthy young high school boy it was still early— today's fatigue wasn't normal at all.

—As expected, even for Kotori, today was exhausting.

Shidou entered his room and then dived into his bed. He immediately fell asleep.

"……ri. Kotori, please wake up. It's time."

Everyone has already fallen asleep— it was long into night. She felt that her right eardrum vibrated and Kotori twitched her eyebrows.

"U……nn……"

But, to be woken up by something like that, a 13-years-old sleep (such as Itsuka Kotori) wasn't that shallow.

On top of her bed she twisted her body around, rolling up the blanket and winding it around her body before turning over to the side, and once again started to give out calm sleeping sounds.

"…Kotori. Kotori. Please do not go back to sleep"

"Un~"

Kotori used her hands to rub her weak blinking eyes, and sluggishly brought her body up.

"Whaaat is it…Oniii-chaan…"

"……Sorry but I am not Shin. It’s me, Reine."

She made a small twist with her neck, and "Fuaaaaaaaa……" giving one big yawn.

"Reine…? What's wrong, at a time like this…"

While Kotori was rubbing her eyes with her one hand, and the other was swinging at the bedside, finding her hand phone while groping with her hands, she turned on the lights on the menu screen and squinted her eyes towards the display.

It was 3:20 A.M. It was the time when, all good and bad kids were inside their dreams.

"…The preparations are ready. We’re leaving the final instructions to you."

After being told that, Kotori [ah] opened her mouth with a small gap.

"Un…Oh yeah…I asked you...to help me...wake up…"

While Kotori was bobbing her head like Reine, she once again reached towards the area around her bedside.

And she took into her hand, a mouth-sized rod attached candy that she had placed there. She then tore open the messy wrapping and shoved it into her mouth.

"-!"

At that instant, on her tongue something like an explosive-like feeling was transmitted to her brain. Kotori jiggled her whole body. And at the same time, a refreshing and stimulating fragrance passed through her nasal cavity.

Yes, that wasn’t the usual Chupa Chups. It was her secret weapon, the super refreshing Super Mental Candy that Kotori uses only when she wants to hold back her drowsiness.

Kotori took her black ribbon in her hands, and tied her hair in her usual twin tails.

"Ah- I have woken up. Sorry about that, Reine."

"…I don't mind- without delay, this is the report. Shin is currently in a sleeping state."

"I see. And, how about the other members?"

"…I told them to be on stand-by as ordered. We can go at any time."

"That’s sufficient."

When Kotori said that, she killed the sound of her footsteps and left her room, descended down the stairs and reached the front door.

And then, with the sound of *kachinn*, the door was unlocked.

In front of the front door there were black battle uniforms and Balaclava.[2A 2], There were several men in this American Special Forces-like attire ready on stand-by.

"The target is on the second floor. I’m counting on all of you."

"Roger."

The men obeyed Kotori’s instruction, and invade the Itsuka house without making any sound with their feet.

"Un…Uunnn…"

Shidou let out a small moan, and on top of the bed he lightly stretched his spine.

His eyes greeted the morning sun light coming from the window, and the sound of birds chirping was entering into his ear.

"Un…It’s already morning huh."

He spilled out a yawn, while blinking his eyes, he turned to the other side of the bed.

—And.

"Ah…? What is this…?"

The felt like his cheek touched something soft. Shidou raised his eyebrows a little.

In order to find its identity, he slowly placed his hand around his head, and felt around.

When he did that, from the direction above his head.

"Un…"

What the—

A cute voice was heard.

"……"

Shidou stopped his breathing for a moment, and gathers his thoughts.

He took a glance of his surroundings. In front of his eyes was a thin fleece cloth. And on the ceiling, he could see a lamp, that was different from his own room.

Over there— This was not Shidou's room.

Judging from the room's interior…It looked like it was the guest room on the second floor which he seldom entered.

"Whi~ch me~ans…"

He slowly, very slowly turned his face to look up above his head.

"……Mu?"



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Over there, as expected, was Tohka’s beautiful appearance.

She probably woke up moments ago. The instant Shidou raised his sights upwards— their eyes, met.

"……"

"……"

After a few seconds.

"Hiiiiiiiii——"

"Wha…?"

Shidou and Tohka choked at almost the same time— and quickly they both got up from that spot, as if a gong was rung initiating the start of a competition, they split themselves apart and took some distance— one towards the pillow side and the other towards the leg side of the bed.

"Wha-What are you doing, shidou! Why are you on my bed…!?"

"I-I Do-Don’t know! Wh-Wh-Wh-Wh-What am I doing here…!?"

"The one asking should be me!"

"You’re righttttt!"

Shidou, while in an unexplainable tension shouted.

And, at that timing the door of the room opened, Kotori appeared.

"Okay, Out! Calm down a little more, Shidou."

"……Kotori……!? Do-Don’t tell me, this was your doing!"

"Let me see, what this is about. Isn’t it about Shidou being unable to restrain his overflowing blue libido of puberty, so he crawled into Tohka’s futon? Stop making weird accusations on me."

Kotori shrugged her shoulders while acting dumb, and said that with a small smile on her face.

"Wha…?"

From those words, Tohka face blushed, and pulled the blanket to cover her chest.

"I-I'm innocent!"

He shouted, Kotori didn’t care and for some reason, started to take out a hand phone from her pocket.

But that was, for some reason Shidou’s property.

"You…Isn’t that my phone. What are you doing?"

"Eh? Aah."

Kotori made a small grin, and turned the phone screen so that it could face Shidou.

On that screen a mail had been written. And the receiver's name— Tonomachi Hiroto, Shidou’s friend, was being displayed.

"—!?"

Shidou choked. That's because the mail's article was about—

"There is an incredible radio station. Try listening to it. It seriously causes my heart to tremble. This will change your view on life."

After writing something like that, she had placed the URL of a web page onto the end of the message.

"Huh…? Wha-What is that URL…"

"Aah, yesterday’s show started its transmission on the internet radio. With this on the internet, anyone can listen to Shidou’s masterpiece anytime they want to."

"Wha…!?"

Shidou, his eyes opened wide with fear and stretched out his arm.

"St-Sto——"

Before Shidou finished his word, Kotori pressed the send button.

"Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!?"

He shouted and snatched back his cell phone, and was desperately pressing the cancel button— too late.

Due to the convenience of the modern civilization that transmit information quickly, a disastrous piece of information had been sent to his friend.

"Wha-What the hell did you do…!"

"It's a Penalty. It's going to be troubling if you are going to panic from just touching Tohka’s breast with your cheek."

"Un, Even if you say th...at…?"

He sensed an uncomfortable feeling after hearing Kotori’s words, he then twisted his neck.

…Come to think of it, the moment he gained his awareness, he felt like he touched an unusually soft object.

He timidly looked towards where Tohka was, her eyes were filled with circles.

And then, for some reasons she remembered a feeling from just now and started touching her body— after touching the area where her breasts are, her whole body stiffened up.

"……"

Poof! It appeared almost as if smoke were about to rise, Tohka’s face was completely red.

"U…Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

And then Tohka raised a tremendous scream, and started grabbing things around her and throwing randomly.

"Uwahh……Ca-calm down, Tohka!"

Shidou dodged somehow, and tried leaving the room but, he was hit by an Akebeko[2A 3] ornament, and fainted.

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Chapter 2: Rainy Girl

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Part 1

"Oh, Itsuka…Eh? What happened to you?"

It was morning and Shidou, who was dragging his heavy legs into the classroom, was called out with a puzzled voice by Tonomachi.

Well even if it wasn't him, looking at his current state, everyone would have had the same impression too.

Because whether it was his face or hands, his whole body was practically covered in bandages, on top of that his steps were staggering so much that it seemed like he would fall over anytime.

"…Aah, a little something."

Shidou gave a wry smile while saying so, then let out a small sigh.

Over to the side Tonomachi, as if he remembered something, suppressed his laughter.

"Oh yeah, I heard that net radio, what was up with that? It was pretty damn interesting."

Shidou's face twitched upon hearing those words.

"Y-you've already heard it? that..."

"Oh, I listened to it a little before I left the house. But... that's supposed to be a joke right? It would be scary if that were real."

"Ah…Hahahaha… Yeah, y-you're right…"

Shidou let out a dry laugh and averted his gaze.

"Lea-Leaving that aside Tonomachi, what are you looking at?"

Shidou raised his voice in order to change the topic as it would be troublesome if he gained more interest in that radio broadcast.

Tonomachi looked like he was gazing seriously at the gravure page in the back of a manga magazine.

"Ah, this— Oh yeah, I also want to ask you about something."

"W-what is it?"

Shidou asked him back. Tonomachi was unusually serious and continued speaking.

"Nurse, miko, or maid…… Which one do you like most?"

"…Huh?"

Shidou let out a startled voice due to Tonomachi's unexpected question.

"It's been decided that the gravure costume for the next issue will be based on the readers' voting poll… This is so troubling."

"…Ahh, is that so…"

Shidou replied with a sigh. Tonomachi seemed like he didn't mind and thrust the magazine towards Shidou.

"So? Which one do you like!?"

"Eh…errrrmm…then……the maid…?"

Shidou replied due to being pressured by Tonomachi's unusual vigor. In that moment, Tonomachi's eyebrows suddenly twitched.

"Wh-What's wrong?"

"——To think that you would like maids! I'm sorry but our friendship ends here!"

"……"

Shidou, scratched his cheek, then walked over to his own seat.

"H-Hey, where are you going? Itsuka!"

"……Our friendship ends here right?"

"Hey, What the heck? Aren't you being too serious. Don't you think a world where

Maid lovers and Nurse lovers can coexist in peace is also kind of good? "

It seems like Tonomachi is in the Nurse faction.

Shidou placed his bag on his seat, all the while ignoring Tonomachi who threw the magazine on his table and followed him over.

At that moment, the girl sitting beside him who was reading a bulky reference book ——Origami Tobiichi glanced towards him.

"……"

"O-Oh…Tobiichi, good morning."

"Good morning."

Origami replied in a monotonous voice and then tilted her head.

"Maid?"

It seemed that she heard the conversation just now. Shidou waved his hands all flustered.

"…Uh, n-no, don't mind that."

"I see."

Origami made a short reply and once again returned her sights towards the book.

"Good mornin—"

Immediately after, Tonomachi waved his hands towards her, but Origami's expression did not change in the slightest.

Tonomachi shrugged his shoulders exaggeratedly, and started grinding Shidou in the side of his stomach.

"Although this happens every time. Why is it always you who always gets a reply back after a welcome? Y-You…"

"Ho-How should I know? Stop it already."

Shidou shook off the annoying Tonomachi, and arrived at his seat.

The door of the classroom rolled open, and Tohka entered.

Naturally, due to Tohka currently now living in the Itsuka family house, the route to school was exactly the same as Shidou's. However, if they were to go to school together it would probably appear suspicious, so Tohka had to leave a bit later after Shidou.

In addition to that, she was still affected by that terrible induction she received after moving into his house yesterday. He couldn't bear adding more fuel to the fire when 75 days haven't even past.

"……"

Tohka silently sat in her seat on the right side of Shidou's desk and without looking at him, she moved her lips.

"…Err, about…this morning, I'm sorry. Is your body okay?"

It seems she was still bothered about that matter this morning. Shidou scratched his cheeks while making a bitter smile.

"O-Oh…Don't worry about it…"

"Mu……"

Tohka made a small nod. And finally— Shidou had realized something.

"…Ah."

Several classmates were listening in on their conversation and were sending them stares of interest.

But, it seems Tohka had not yet realized it.

"Bu-But you were also at fault too. You suddenly…You know…I was surprised."

Because of Tohka's words, everyone listening caught their breath.

"To-Tohka…Why don't we have this talk later…?"

"Huh? Why is that?"

Tohka faced Shidou while tilting her head, and finally noticed the gazes coming

from everyone.

"…Eh?"

Tohka gasped in surprise and sweat starting falling down her cheeks. She had remembered that yesterday at home it was explained to her that the fact that Shidou and Tohka were living together was a secret.

"I-It's not what you think everyone! It's not like me and Shidou are living together!?"

"——!?"

Everyone from the class frowned all at the same time.

"I-Idiot…"

Shidou muttered softly and then intentionally spoke in a loud voice.

"A-Aaah! In the morning when going to school we coincidentally bumped into each other! Were you okay Tohka!?"

"Mu…? U-Umu, no problem!"

Tohka seemed to have guessed what Shidou intended, although it was difficult, they matched their lies together.

Well, although it did look kind of forced…Originally, the talk of [a high school male and female living together] itself sounded unrealistic, he continued blabbering until everyone felt satisfied just in case.

…Well even so, there was still one person to Shidou's left side who wasn't satisfied…A female student was releasing a glare that would give anyone the chills.

"……"

Somehow, he felt like he would come out tattered. Shidou made a deep sigh.

—However, that problem would be resolved at a surprising speed.

The 4th period bell rang and echoed throughout the building, indicating that lunch

break had started.

And at the same time,

"shidou! It's lunch time!"

"……"

At Shidou's desk— to the left and right, *Jyan*! tables were docked on both sides.

And of course, on his right was Tohka, and on the left was Origami.

"…Nu…What do you want? You're disturbing us."

"That's my line."

From Shidou's left and right, sharp gazes were exchanged from both sides.

"We-Well……Calm down. Isn't it okay if everyone eats together? Right…?"

When Shidou said that, reluctantly, Tohka and Origami quietly sat down. And then both of them took out their own bentos [2B 1]. from their respective bags.

Shidou followed, bringing out his own bento, and placed it on the table. All of them opened their lids together, and then—

"……"

He saw Origami's eyes widen a little bit, and he cursed himself for being unprepared.

Shidou's bento was something he made for himself in the morning. And of course it was made along with Kotori's (although she hadn't been returning home this month).

Naturally— if it was necessary to prepare another person's portion of hurriedly prepared bento, it was Shidou's job to do so.

"……"

Origami gave Shidou a cold look, and compared Shidou and Tohka's bento boxes— checking the contents.

—The same menu was arranged inside both of their bentos, looking identical.

"Nu, wha-what? Even if you give me that look, I won't give it to you…"

Tohka didn't realize the seriousness of this matter and gave Origami a puzzled look.

"What is the meaning of this?"

"Thi-This is…"

When Origami asked her question, Shidou burst out in a cold sweat and avoided eye-contact.

"Ac-Actually. This was being sold by the lunch vendor this morning and coincidentally Tohka was also there—"

"Liar."

Origami interrupted Shidou midway, and then removed Shidou's bento box lid.

"154 days ago, you bought this at the discount shop that is in front of the station for 1580 yen, and you are still using it. This is not something from the lunch vendor."

"H-How do you know something like tha-?"

"That isn't important right now."

No, he thought that this was kind of an important question, but he was overpowered by Origami and wasn't in a position to say anything. Like just now, his words would have been stopped halfway.

"Muu, what were you two talking about just now! Don't split up the group!"

From the side, Tohka who was feeling left out, raised her voice, puffing up her cheeks.

And, at that moment.

Uuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu----------

A loud alarm sounded and echoed throughout the whole town.

In an instant, the noisy classroom during lunch break, suddenly went quiet.

—It was the spacequake alarm.

Around 30 years ago, a threat towards people, the worst disaster, was referred to as spacequake, and looms as an omen for disaster.

"……"

At that moment, Origami had showed an expression of hesitation, and then immediately stood up from her seat and left the classroom at an amazing speed.

"…Eh?"

Shidou was in a confused state and could only follow her using his eyes…Well, although it was a little indiscreet, he couldn't help but think that he was saved by the alarm ringing at the perfect time.

While Tobiichi Origami was a student, she was also a talented individual in the Ground Self-Defense Forces' AST.

Meaning, she was heading towards the battlefront right at this moment— To kill the Spirits, just like the situation with Tohka before.

"……"

Shidou clenched his teeth.

He knew he couldn't stop Origami. But—

Over there at the classroom door, a girl's voice echoed in a dazed state.

"……Everyone, it's the alarm. Please evacuate to the underground shelter immediately."

The physics teacher dressed in a white coat— Reine, pointed her fingers towards the direction of the corridor.

After the students swallowed their saliva, they exited towards the corridor one by one.

"Nu? shidou, where is everyone going?"

Tohka asked while looking at the other classmates and tilting her head.

"Ah-Aah…to the shelter. There is one under the school."

"Shelter…?"

"Aah. For now, let's leave the explanation for later. We are going too Tohka."

"Nu-Nuu."

Tohka regretfully glanced at her untouched bento, and stood up following Shidou's instruction.

They followed the other classmates and exited to the corridor.

"……Shin. You're coming this way."

Riene caught Shidou by the collar.

"Uh, Reine-san? This way means…"

"……Isn't it obvious? We're going to the <Fraxinus>."

When Shidou questioned her, he raised his voice but not loud enough to allow the other students to hear them, and Reine replied.

"……It has only been one day……You might not have made your decision yet on what you will do from now on. But there's something we want to show you. The Spirits and the current situation."

Shidou swallowed his saliva to moisten his dry throat and clenched his fist.

"…I understand. I'll go."

Reine made a small nod sleepily with one eye open, and after looking at the students that were lined up, she faced towards the entrance.

"……Well, let's hurry. It won't be long before the spacequake."

"Y-Yes. And— Ah, Reine-san. Is it okay if we didn't bring Tohka along?"

He said as he glanced towards Tohka.

Speaking of Tohka, she was looking confusedly at the classmates that were lining up for evacuation.

"……Aah, it's about that— Umu, we will have Tohka evacuate to the shelter with everyone else."

"Eh? Is that okay?"

"……Aah. With her powers currently in a sealed state, Tohka isn't that different from other humans. Also, if she sees the battle between the Spirit and the AST, she might be troubled if she remembers the time it happened to her. I told you right? [Ratatoskr] wants to avoid having Tohka accumulate stress as much as possible."

"No, but……"

Right when Shidou wanted to say something, down from the direction of the corridor, a high pitched voice echoed.

"Ho-Hora, Itsuka-kun and Yatogami-san, even Murasame-sensei too! P-Please don't just stop and stand over there! If both of you don't hurry and evacuate, the dangerous is danger!"

Shidou's homeroom teacher Okamine Tamae, nicknamed Tama-chan, perked up her small shoulders and said that in a hurried state. The meaning of her words was confusing though.

"……Un, if we get caught we'll end up in an annoying situation. Let's go."

Reine made a signal with her eyes and faced her feet towards the entrance.

"Uh, ah wait a second—"

Although it was a little worrying, it couldn't be helped. Shidou made a small groan and scratched his head. He then took Tohka's hand and placed it in Tama-chan's hand.

"Sensei, I'm counting on you to take care of Tohka!"

"Fue? Eh? Ah, ye-yes, of course."

Tama-chan was quickly entrusted with Tohka, her eyes were in circles as if she was suddenly dumbfounded, while saying [I-I'm also a teacher too!"].

"shidou…?"

Tohka curved her eyebrows in uneasiness.

"Tohka, listen. Please evacuate together with Sensei to the shelter."

"What about you? What are you going to do shidou?"

"Ah…I, have an important task to do. Go on ahead without me. Okay?"

"…! Ah! Shi-shidou!"

"Itsuka-kun! Murasame-sensei too!? Where are the both of you going!?"

While hearing worried voices from the pair left behind, Shidou and Reine ran outside the school building.

Part 2

"—Aah, both of you came. The Spirit will soon appear. I'm counting on you for the preparations, Reine."

From the captain's seat, Kotori said this to them, with Shidou and Reine having arrived on the bridge of the <Fraxinus>.

"…Ah."

Reine made a small nod, flapping back her white coat's hem, and sat down at her console on the lower bridge.

"—Now then…"

And, when Shidou remained silent, Kotori asked him a question while tilting her head.

"Although we are sorry that we didn't give you much time but have you made your decision? Shidou."

"…Uh—"

He choked. But, over from the bridge, a loud sound from the siren echoed.

"Wha…What?"

"An unusually strong Spirit wave reading has been detected! It's coming!"

A male crew member's shout came from the lower bridge, and Shidou's eyes were spinning from the confusion.

When Kotori heard the shout, *pachin* she snapped her fingers.

"Okay. Switch the Main monitor to the image of where the prediction site is."

When Kotori gave the order, a bird's-eye view of the town was projected on the main monitor.

It was the main street which was lined with many shops. Of course there were no

human figures visible, as if it was a ghost town.

In the middle of that image, *Warp*.

"Eh…?"

At first, he had thought that the image projector was having some problems but—that was wrong.

The space.

The space, that originally was empty, distorted, it was as if a ripple on the surface of water was created by throwing a rock at it.

"Wha-What is this…?"

"Ara? Is this the first time Shidou has seen this?"

The moment Kotori said that, the space distortion grew larger—

He thought that a small light was produced on the screen, and together with the sound of an explosion, the screen had turned pure white.

"——!"

Although he knew that this was an event happening inside the screen, he instinctively covered his face with his arms.

After a few seconds, while slowly dropping his arms, he opened his eyes, and on the screen was a totally different scene from before.

In the town, a hole had opened up.

There was no other way to express it.

A portion of the buildings that were supposed to be lined up, were shaved off into a shallow bowl shape.

Shops, street lights, telephone poles, and even the surface of the road that was supposed to be there, everything, had disappeared.

What's more, maybe due to the after-effects of the explosion, the surrounding area looked as if a huge hurricane had struck.

This mess…it resembles that place about one month ago, the place where he first met Tohka.

Which means, just now, that was—

"…Spacequake…"

Shidou said in a shaky voice, Kotori [yes] consented.

"—This is the dimensional distortion that occurs when a Spirit comes over to this world. And the calamity of an outbreak-inducing nature."

"……"

He had seen the ruins of buildings many times but this was his first time seeing the moment the explosion occurred.

His palms were sweaty.

There were times when he tried to figure out the phenomenon in his head— and thanks to this experience, he finally felt like he understood it.

He understood the terror it causes— The town, the space where people live their daily lives, was destroyed, all in an instant.

"Well, at least this time the explosion was on a small-scale."

"It seems like it."

Kotori and a tall man right behind her— Vice commander Kannazuki Kyouhei, had commented.

"Good fortune— was what I wanted to say, but since this is the [Hermit] this much should be normal."

"Well, I guess so. Even among the Spirits, she has the docile-type disposition."

Shidou, still silent, pushed together his brows.

—That explosion just now, it was small-scaled?

At first, he didn't understand what Kotori and the others were talking about, but then immediately remembered.

That might be the case. Since the spacequake left a crater around 10 meters in diameter. From their perspective, it should be a small compared to the others.

Of course…even if he fully understood this now…

"…Hey, Kotori."

Something in Kotori and the others' conversation bothered Shidou. He opened his mouth to speak.

"What on earth is [Hermit]?"

"Aah, it's the code-name of the Spirit that just appeared. Wait for a moment— Can you zoom in on the screen?"

Kotori, pointed her finger towards the crew members on the lower bridge.

When she did that, the image zoomed in, towards the crater that was right in the middle of the town.

And with that, something changed on-screen.

"…Rain?"

Shidou quietly muttered.

Without warning, he thought that the screen turn darker, *drip**drip*, rain started to descend.

But— that wasn't what interested him, he no longer cared about the rain.

In the middle of the area that looked like a crater, they were able to detect the figure of a small girl.

"—?!"

A shock hit his heart, as if it had been grabbed by an eagle's talons, and passed throughout his whole body.

Standing still in the middle of the enlarged screen, was the figure of one girl. And what's more— he recognized of her.

"Ah, that is…"

Covered by a hood with rabbit ears like accessories, was a blue haired girl.

She looked to be around 13 to 14 years old, wearing a large coat and innerwear made from a mysterious material.

And on her left hand, with a comical design, a rabbit puppet was equipped.

If Shidou's eyes and brain were working properly…then that was without a doubt—

The girl he had encountered yesterday when he was returning home from school.

"—? What's wrong Shidou?"

Seeing Shidou act strangely, Kotori spoke in a dubious voice.

Shidou, after gazing at the screen once, reasserted himself.

"I-I've met that with that girl before…"

"What did you say? When did this happen?"

"Just yesterday…when I was returning home in a hurry, rain started falling—"

Shidou, going through his memories, spoke briefly about the events that happened yesterday.



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After hearing Shidou talk for a while, Kotori pointed her fingers to the crew on the lower bridge.

"Send the Spirit wave reading from yesterday at 1600 to 1700 to my terminal, ASAP!"

And then she lowered her sights to the screen she was holding, and scratched her head in frustration.

"…It didn't recognize the main numerical value of the disorder huh. It was the same with Tohka last time…Shidou, why didn't you tell me this at home yesterday?"

"Do-don't say something impossible. I didn't know she was a Spirit when I first met her…!"

At the same time Shidou was shouting, the speaker that was installed on the <Fraxinus> bridge roared with a loud sound.

"—!? What, is going on—"

"—The Spirit did appear…So we aren't the only ones taking action."

Shidou's finger tips twitched a little from Kotori's words.

"The AST…huh?"

"Yes."

He glanced towards the screen— Smoke swirled around the place where the Spirit was — which was now being called [Hermit]. Probably, a missile or some sort of explosive was launched at her.

And surrounding her, a small number of humans wearing heavy mechanical armor were floating around.

The Ground Self-Defense Forces' Anti-Spirit Team, in short, the AST.

Different from the organization, [Ratatoskr], which was led by Kotori and the others, they were a special team holding military power that aimed to eliminate all Spirits.

Inside the smoke, a small silhouette *Hop*, jumped out— It was [Hermit].

The girl with her left hand tucked into a puppet came out. She twisted her body to escape from the surrounding AST members holding their ground, and leapt into the sky.

The AST members immediately responded, and pursued [Hermit] all at once.

And with the weapons that were installed into their armor, an innumerable amount of ammunitions were fired.

"—! Look out!"

Reflexively Shidou had shouted— but the warning didn't do anything useful across the screen. The large barrage of bullets and missiles released by the AST members hit [Hermit]'s body mercilessly.

"Those guys……doing that to that girl…"

His eyes opened wide, and he was grinding the back of this teeth.

"……What are you trying to say after all this time?"

As he did that, Kotori, had said that while having her eyes halfway open.

"Didn't you learn anything when this happened to Tohka? To the AST, it doesn't matter what appearance the Spirits take. The only thing that matters is their sense of duty to protect this world; To those people, they would reject any dangerous existence and follow their survival instincts like animals."

"But…even so!"

The moment Shidou opened his mouth, from the smoke, the girl leapt into the sky once again.

But- [Hermit] wasn't fighting back and was only running from place to place.

"That girl…Why doesn't she fight back?"

"This isn't unusual. Even among the Spirits [Hermit] is a very docile type."

"…Then—"

"If you're asking for the AST to have mercy, it's useless— As long as that girl is a Spirit, they won't stop."

"…Kuh!"

In response to the flat out answer, Shidou bit his lip.

No…Even if he were to repeat himself, he already knew the answer.

Her disposition, or her personality, to the AST it doesn't matter.

To them, they only cared about taking down the enemy that causes harm to this world.

—The method that could overthrow this situation…there was only one way.

Shidou clenched his fingers in a fist so tightly, he thought that blood was about to flow out. Quietly, he cleared his throat.

"…Kotori."

"What?"

"…If it wasn't because of her Spirit power…that girl would have never been targeted by the AST, right?"

When Shidou said that, Kotori knitted her eyebrows together, and her eyes faced Shidou.

"Yes— That's absolutely right."

"The spacequakes…they wouldn't have occurred right?"

"Yes."

Shidou kept quiet for a moment, he took a deep breath, and continued speaking.

"—And I can make that happen?"

"If you still don't believe me after seeing Tohka's present condition, then I don't mind if you doubt me."

"……"

After Shidou scratched his head, he used both his hands to pull his cheeks.

He gently lifted his down cast eyes, and reasserted his determination.

"Help me with this, Kotori! …I— want to save that girl…!"

"—Fufu…"

Kotori, looking happy, made her candy rod stand up.

"Now that is—— My Onii-chan."

She turned to face the crew on the lower bridge, and shouted.

"All members prepare for a Level One capture!"

"ROGER!"

The crew members began manipulating their consoles all at once.

While Kotori was gazing upon this scene, she licked her lips.

"Now then—— let us begin the Date War!"

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Part 3

"—Hey, Tama-chan sensei."

Tohka who had evacuated to the established large-type underground shelter in the school, as if to suppress her rustling feelings, grabbed the hem of her skirt tightly, and asked Tamae who was sitting right beside her.

"Ya-Yatogami-san even you have started calling me that…"

Tamae faced towards Tohka, Tamae had now calmed down to a degree compared with a while ago.

But Tohka, disregarding Tama's sigh of rejection, continued her words.

"That sound just now, what was that? What on earth is this place?"

"Wha-What are you saying. That alarm just now was the spacequake alarm. Because there might be a chance a spacequake might occur, everyone has been evacuated to the underground shelter since it will be safe here."

"Spacequake…? What is that?"

Tohka tilted her head, and Tama-chan wore a 'surprised' expression.

"Eh? What is a spacequake? You don't know?"

"……Muu."

After being told that, Tohka made an awkward and unhappy face.

It would seem that this 'spacequake' thing, was a word that everyone knows.

There might be a chance that she had asked a bad question. Tohka had been warned by Shidou to avoid doing things that might stand out. 'To be extremely ignorant is okay but try to avoid crossing the line that could lead to exposing yourself.'

And, not knowing how to handle the silence, Tama-chan shook her hands in panic.

"Ah, no no, it's alright. I guess that, there are still people that don't know."

"…Nu, sorry."

Tama-chan said [no no] once more, and raised her finger.

"A spacequake is a general term for occurrence of a large scale disaster. Well, in simple words, one day suddenly in the world somewhere, *DON*, an explosion will occur. Although there are many theories taught like the 'Atmospheric Pressure Alteration theory' or 'Plasma theory' but the real cause has still not been clarified."

"—An explosion, you say?"

Through Tama-chan explanation, Tohka raised her eyebrows.

"Yes. The biggest one to date was around 30 years ago. The Eurasia Sky Disaster. There were around 150 million casualties, it was the worst disaster since the dawn of history."

"Wha-What's up with that, wasn't that dangerous!"

"Yes. That is why everyone evacuates to the Shelters— Well, although there haven't been any spacequakes that big since then— in this neighborhood, for the past few years there have been small scale explosions occurring frequently."

From Tama-chan's lecture, Tohka's eyebrows came together closely.

"The-Then why isn't shidou here at this dangerous time, where did he go?"

"Eh…? Eh, errrr……that is……"

Tamae, adjusting her glasses awkwardly, looked over to the other students that were sitting around.

"……"

While remaining silent Tohka, started gripping the hem of her skirt that was in her hands more tightly.

"……shidou."

Thump *Thump*

Around the area of her chest, she heard these sounds.

For some reason she didn't know……She had a bad premonition.

And then, when the throbbing in her heart reached a climax.

"……Uh."

Tohka immediately raised her face.

"Errrr……I-It's okay. Although I can't see him around here……I think he most probably forgot something and went back to get it. He should be back here by now, somewhere around here in the Shelter…"

And, Tamae who was surveying the inside of the Shelter returned her sights to Tohka.

"Ara……? Ya-Yatogami-san?"

She looked at where Tohka was standing before but, her figure disappeared.

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Part 4

"Fuu…This way right?"

Shidou who had been sent to the ground using the teleporter in the lower section of [Fraxinus], was following the voice in the small intercam that was equipped to his right ear.

"Yes. The Spirit is already inside the building. Don't make a mistake with the first contact."

"……Understood."

Shidou said that while his sweat dripped down his cheek, and separated his hand from the intercam.

And then, to calm down his throbbing heart, he took a deep breath.

Right now, Shidou was in a large department tower just outside the shopping district.

It would seem that the [Hermit], was a Spirit that had a fairly high appearance rate— By using movement pattern statistics, which also incorporated the results of Reine's thought analyses, they could estimate the Spirit's most probable route.

And of course, due to the movements of the AST there might be a chance that the route would change. If that happens they would recover Shidou, and then head towards the next predicted location— However, at this moment this department store location was ideal.

The AST's main equipment— the CR-unit was unsuitable for indoor combat.

And naturally, there might be a chance that they would destroy the building to smoke out the Spirit like that time they did to Tohka. But, for the time being, they should be waiting for the Spirit to come out from the building on its own.

And therefore during this time, without the AST knowing, it was a precious opportunity for Shidou to sneak onto the battlefield and converse with the Spirit, even if only for a few minutes.

"……"

In the middle of April, while wearing this intercam and following the instructions from [Ratatoskr], he remembered that time he had his conversation with Tohka.

And to think that, it hasn't even been a month since then. He didn't think that he would once again return onto the battlefield but it couldn't be helped.

For some weird reason which he couldn't understand, Shidou had an unbelievable power.

If he used that power, it could stop the spacequakes. It was also said that it could stop the attacks on the Spirits as well.

—And what's more, that was something that Shidou has wished and hoped for.

"…Well, even if I think that."

Shidou made a small sigh… —And the reason was, he had to seduce the Spirits and kiss them— the difficulty level was somewhat too high for Shidou.

"—Shidou. The [Hermit]'s signal has entered the area."

"—!"

From the unexpected voice echoed by Kotori, it made Shidou's body nervous.

And, at that instant.

"—You, hav' ya come here to bully Yoshinon too…?"

"…Uh!?"

And suddenly a voice echoed from overhead, Shidou quickly raised his head.

Over there was [Hermit], currently floating upside down as if she was defying the laws of gravity.

"Your wrong- Since Yoshinon is a kind girl who hasn't done anything mische— Eh, unn?"

Suddenly, the girl's body that was upside down, flipped around in mid-air— righting herself, before landing on the ground and stood there.

And then, *clatter* *clatter* she moved the puppets mouth.

"oOOYaa? I was wonderin' who it was but aren't ya that lucky pervert Onii-chan?"

After looking at Shidou with a serious face, the puppet skillfully *pon*, smacked his hands together.

…Seriously, how do you control something to that extent with only one hand?

But now wasn't the time and situation to be asking something like that.

Immediately, from his right ear came Kotori's voice, [wait for a moment].

Right after [Hermit] words.

① **"Aah, long time no see. How you doing? You okay?" Frankly give a normal greeting.**

② **"Lucky Pervert? What do you mean by Lucky Pervert, Huh!" Give a casual tsukkomi.** [2B 2]

③ **"Fuu……, I don't know nee. For I, am just a wanderer passing by." Go with the 'Hard-Boil' act.**

Looking at the 3 choices displayed on the <Fraxinus> bridge's main monitor, Kotori licked her lips.

By the way— on the bridge monitor, all sorts of other parameters were being displayed, including an enlarged projection of the [Hermit]'s bust, various stats and text windows.

No matter how you look at it, it was a love simulation game— in short a Galge screen.[2B 3]

"All members, Begin picking your choice!"

Together with Kotori's command, the crew from the lower bridge pushed the buttons on their hand.

All together—— ①,②,③ ,all received roughly the same number of votes.

"Eeh? It should be ②! This galge main character is the Tsukommi-type! It has to that

one!"

One of the crew members insisted. However, immediately another voice came up from another direction.

"—But, wouldn't it be dangerous since we don't know for certain about the opponent's character? I think ① would be appropriate here."

"No no, from the data we've gathered up till now, we know that [Hermit] rarely takes the chance to attack humans! We should setup a confrontation by choosing ③!"

"……Fuumu."

After hearing the opinions from all 3 directions, Kotori touched her jaw and groaned.

And then, facing towards the mike she opened her lips.

"—Shidou, pick ③."

"……Uh, what the heck is that…"

Shidou, muttered that while his butt hit the floor.

The order delivered to his ear by Kotori— It was totally crazy.

"Uun? What's up?"

The puppet skillfully tilted its head.

This wasn't the time to argue.

Shidou immediately stood up from that spot, finding a chair on display nearby, he put one of his legs on the chair.

"Fuu……, I don't know nee. For I, am just a wanderer passing by……"

Swoosh

After conceitedly saying that, he started roughing up his hair.

…Honestly, that was really embarrassing.

"……"

The puppet that [Hermit] was controlling, *Deadpan* with its mouth wide open, kept quiet.

Just like that, a few seconds passed by.

"…H-Hey, Kotori. What are we going to do about this atmosphere……?"

And, the moment Shidou made a small voice of discontent to Kotori.

"Fu……,Ha-Hahahahahahaha!"

The puppet, *clatter**clatter* shook its head while laughing.

"Whaaat? Unexpectedly Onii-chan are you a facetious person? Ahahaha, no one would do that nowadays."

"Ha-Haha……I'm glad that you enjoyed it."

Shidou following the puppet's lead and laughed dryly. No one uses [facetious person] nowadays I think, but he refrained from saying that.

gloom

"……Yeah yeah, sorry about that."

The prideful Kotori replied with a small voice, and Shidou returned his gaze back to [Hermit].

As if matching him, the puppet met Shidou's gaze.

"Iyaa—, but I'm lucky pervert Onii-chan. We meet again in such a weird place— Ahaha, I welcome people like ya Onii-san— It seems that everyone hates Yoshinon — If I were to leave this place, they would probably start attacking me again——"

After saying that, it once again started laughing.

"Well that's one surprisingly, cheerful Spirit."

From his right ear, Shidou heard the same words he was thinking about. As expected, even Kotori thought of the same thing.

And, inside [Hermit] words, there was a word that caught his interest. He opened his mouth a little.

"Hey…Who's Yoshinon?"

When Shidou asked, the puppet made a shocked expression, and opened its mouth wide.

"Ah, what a mistake! For Yoshinon of all people, to forget my own introduction! Yoshinon is Yoshinon's naa—mee cute right? Cute right?"

"Aah,aahh…it's a nice name."

Getting pressured by the high tensioned puppet, he nodded.

When he did that, from his right ear he heard Kotori's dubious voice.

"—Yoshinon, huh? Fuun, this Spirit is different from Tohka— she has information of her own name."

"Ah…"

It seemed true after being told that— Tohka, didn't have her own name.

The word [Tohka], was the name given by Shidou.

His thoughts were suddenly interrupted, as the puppet approached his face.

"Hm so? What is Onii-chan's name?"

"Ah…Aah——My name is Shidou. It's Itsuka Shidou."

"Shidou huh? —That's a cool name. Well, it doesn't beat Yoshinon though~~"

"O-Oh…thanks. Errr…Yoshinon?"

"Hai Hai— What's up? —This is what Yoshinon is impressed by —Shidou-kun's frontier Spirit —making clever conversation —and using the name you just remembered a moment ago——"

After giving back a dry smile to the puppet that was making an exaggerated gesture by opening its hand wide, Shidou continued his words.

"No, it isn't a very important thing, but errr……the Yoshinon I'm talking about—Isn't the puppet but it's your name right?"

With that said he set his sights passed the puppet, towards its back——the blue-eyed girl.

"……"

When he did that, the puppet that had been cheerfully chatty until now, suddenly went silent.

Following that, from his right ear intercam, *Piiii!*, *Piiiii!* the sound of an alarm echoed.

"—Uh, Shidou, the values of her mood suddenly dropped. What on earth did you just say?"

"Eh…? No, I was just, asking why she doesn't talk instead of using ventriloquism…"

When Shidou frankly voiced that question, the puppet wobbled nearer to his face.

"—I don't understand what Shidou-kun said……What is ventriloquism?"

The tone of its voice remained calm. By the way, the puppet's facial expression didn't change at all.

And yet, he felt an unbelievably strong pressure, Shidou took a step back.

"N-No……About that."

"Shidou. You can think of a reason later. You need to fix the Spirit's mood right now."

An instruction came flying from Kotori. Shidou moved his lips while avoiding eye-contact.

"Ye—Yeah you're right! Yoshinon is Yoshinon. Iyaa……Haha…ha."

When he did that.

"Uun, mou——, it's because Shidou-kun is a mischievous guy——"

The dreadful mood from just now vanished like it was a lie, the puppet voice echoed

in high pitch.

"……Wha-What was that just now?"

"Dunno……Well, no matter how friendly she is, the opponent is a Spirit. It's a bad idea to lower your guard."

When Shidou gave a small nod, he fixed his sights back to [Yoshinon].

"Errr——"

Although he didn't let out any words immediately.

When Shidou hesitated to say anything. Kotori's irritated voice snapped.

"Don't freeze up now. Set it up so that the Spirit can't run away."

"…Ho-how…?"

"That sort of thing, isn't it clear what you need to do? You are inside a large department store you know? Since you have time, you should be able to date, right? You understand? Listen— It's not [why don't we have a date?]— It's [let's go on a date], that is the goal. Don't give the opponent an option to pick."

"Ha-Haa……"

While feeling nervous Shidou, returned to facing [Yoshinon].

"L-Let's go on a date?"

And without any preamble, he repeated the line exactly as heard.

"……Without any setup. Can't you have played it a bit more smoother?"

Kotori said disappointedly.

[Yoshinon] didn't seem to react. No, rather the tension seemed to have risen, making it hard to say anything.

clap *clap*

The puppet clapped its small hands together.

"HoHo~~! That's nice—— Regardless of how ya look, ya're pretty gutsy to give an invitation out like that. Ufuun, of course it's an O-K. Rather, I finally encountered a human that I can have a decent conversation with. So it is more like Yoshinon to be the one wishing for it~~"

With that said, *Clatter* *Clatter* it laughed.

"I-I see……"

"……Well, I guess everything turned out all right in the end."

While hearing Kotori's voice mixed with her sigh, Shidou together with [Yoshinon], began walking around the department store together.

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Part 5

"……"

Origami, whose whole body was wrapped by a wiring suit and stocked with ammunition for her auto-range weapon, was patrolling the sky above the department store.

Around her surroundings there were a few other AST members with the same equipment flying around, and they were all bracing themselves.

AST— Anti-Spirit Team, as a special unit of the JGSDF, they were a team with remarkable and highly special characteristics.

Prepared with a machine that can turn fantasy into reality— the Realizer. They are the team formed to counter the calamity that could destroy the world— the Spirits.

However, only a limited number of humans could use the Combat Realizer unit in practical combat— this limit resulted in the recruitment of irregular members like Origami.

Living in a house outside the garrison, moreover she was allowed to go to school, and only dispatched when there was an emergency.

Even though she received this special treatment, she was a JGSDF member whose dispatch frequency was extremely high.

"……"

Raindrops were continuously pelting the surface of her deployed Territory. [2B 4] That Spirit— it has been almost an hour since [Hermit] first entered the building.

But, [Hermit] was still hiding inside; even now she hasn't made an appearance.

"—Looks like she's being very persistent."

And through her transmitter, she heard the voice of her team captain, Kusakabe Ryouko.

"This is rare even for [Hermit]. To be staying in one spot like this. Normally she would have been spotted *Hop* *Hop* jumping around the place by now."

Yes. [Hermit]'s only movement pattern was mostly just running away.

Everytime Origami and the others had launched an attack, she would just run around, without even fighting back.

But, if she gained the knowledge that by passing time inside buildings could result in a [Lost][2B 5]—— to Origami this was not an amusing matter.

"The permission to attack?"

Origami asked in a soft voice, and Ryouko replied with a hint of a sigh in her voice:

"—I did try asking for permission, just in case but they said to remain on stand-by."

"Even if the building structure was to collapse, there is the possibility for repairs."

"…Well, if you were to think about it logically, that would seem to be the case. But it isn't that simple. Somebody has to pay for the repair unit, it isn't free— If this situation was like the [Princess] class, like last time then it would be okay— But this time the target is just the weakling [Hermit] class, you know?"

"……"

[Princess].

From that code-name, Origami twitched her eyebrows a little.

Not knowing the exact details of what she went through but the Spirit that held that code-name was now, the human girl— Yatogami Tohka, who was attending the same high school as Origami.

Of course, Origami having confirmed Tohka's existence, had informed Ryouko about it.

But for some reason they couldn't detect a Spirit reading coming from her, thus the assault permission wasn't granted.

Asking for the impossible and then having her family register investigated, they were unable to find anything suspicious.

At the very least, at this time —although Origami was extremely dissatisfied— she was a Japanese citizen, an existence that was Origami's duty to protect.

And so—

"……?"

Origami narrowed her eyes unexpectedly.

In that moment, from the corner of her eye, she felt she saw the shimmer of beautiful black hair.

Yes. It was as if she saw Tohka over there.

Looking down— at the area that had become uninhabitable; she faced the main street that was under a heavy downpour.

"……"

But, she was unable to confirm Tohka's presence.

Origami shook her head silently. It would seem like she was becoming edgy.

If she were to let the Spirit slip away like this, it would be embarrassing. Origami took in a light breath, refocusing herself and continued her patrol.

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Part 6

—Sometime had passed since he met [Yoshinon].

Shidou and [Yoshinon] were having a lively conversation, while walking around the inside of the department store.

As normal, sometimes Kotori would whisper some instructions into his ear— oddly enough [Yoshinon] has a low susceptibility towards gags; no matter how lame it was *clatter* *clatter* she would still laugh.

In reality, the <Fraxinus> bridge was monitoring her mental condition, and good values were being reported.

It would make people think that the sudden change in her manner earlier was some kind of mistake; at the moment things were developing favorably.

"—Fumu, this is going beyond my expectations."

Kotori said those words.

"It might be that she has the characteristic that attracts people. The favorable impression is also great. Even if I say to kiss her right now, she won't refuse right?"

"…Hey hey."

He couldn't be sure whether those words were a joke or whether she was being serious, he scratched his cheek.

But in reality, Shidou was also shocked.

Although he was able to talk to Tohka normally now, the first time they met she had a serious case of distrust against humans— each time she got the wrong idea he would encounter a life or death experience.

…But.

"As I thought being able to chat sure is F~u~N. It seems like those other people are boorish—"

"Ha……haha."

The puppet *clatter* *clatter* opened its mouth and said those words, and he replied in a strangled tone.

…How do you say it? He was still troubled.

That wish he hoped to grant— The conversation was proceeding smoothly and lively, and the values in her affection level were rising, then there shouldn't be any problems……that should be the case, but...

"……"

Shidou silently, glanced in the direction of the girl that was fiddling with her puppet.

When meeting her yesterday, and today too. The only one that was doing the speaking was the puppet through ventriloquisms; that person's mouth herself did not even move an inch.

It was like…yes, she was like the string puller for the puppet at a stage theater.

"——Ooo?"

"……Uh!"

And, Shidou was suddenly startled when the puppet unexpectedly turned its face towards him.

"Amazing!! What's that—!"

The puppet excitedly clapped its hands and ran towards the place it had pointed out — Well, of course the one doing the running was that person herself.

The object that caught [Yoshinon] interest, was the thing assembled in one corner of the toy store, a small jungle gym that was made for little kids.

At the excessively colorful strengthen plastic castle, she skillfully climbed up with only her hands and legs.

And when she reached the top of it.

"Wahaha! How is it Shidou-kun~? Am I cool? Is Yoshinon Cool~?"

Such a voice was bounced right down at him.

"H-Hey, it's dangerous if you stand there."

The jungle gym was designed for indoor use and for children. Even if it wasn't that big, she might hurt herself if she were to fall from the top.

No, although he knew she could fly up to the sky, but for some reason in Shidou's mind, he recalled yesterday's image of her [Sliiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiddeee!].

In a panic, he rushed over to the base of the jungle gym.

But [Yoshinon] shook the puppet hand unsatisfied.

"unMou, even though I was asking if I was cool or not— and, wa-wawawa…!?"

"Wha—!"

It might be that her balance broke when she did that action, on the top of the jungle gym [Yoshinon] flapping her arms as if she was dancing, and then fell right on top of Shidou.

And just like that, while breaking [Yoshinon]'s fall, they crashed onto the floor.

"Uh…ihee……"

While his face was facing upwards, he let out that sound. And for some reason, his front tooth hurt.

And— he had a bad feeling.

Somehow, the girl with blue hair, her graceful facial features were there— right in front of him.

—And just right around the area of his lips, an oddly soft sensation was felt.

"——Umh!?"

After a few seconds, he understood the current situation that he was being put under right now.

"…Wow. Good going, Shidou!"

Even Kotori thought that this development was unexpected. She let out a surprised voice.

That was expected. Because right now Shidou was— with the girl that fell from above, he just managed to perfectly exchange a kiss with her.

"……"

—Keeping quiet, [Yoshinon] raised her body. And at that moment, their lips finally separated.

Unexpectedly……they had kissed.

But with this, [Yoshinon]'s powers should be sealed.

But…wondering why, compared to last month, during the time when he exchanged kisses with Tohka— this time there wasn't a warm feeling flowing into his body or how'd you put it?—

—And, once again from the other side of the intercam, a loud siren resounded.

"Wha…?"

He let out his voice while raising his eyebrows— shouldn't her power have been sealed?

But this sound was, when the Spirit's mood was breaking apart, something that would ring when danger was approaching Shidou.

This meant that [Yoshinon] was now—

"Ouch ouch— ……Sorry sorry, Shidou-kun. I was careless——"

But when [Yoshinon], *clatter* *Clatter* moved the puppet, she spoke calmly.

"Eh…?"

Dumbfounded, he opened his eyes wide. At [Yoshinon], who was not showing any signs of anger.

If that was the case, then what was the sound of the alarm that was being sent into his ears?

"——Shidou, it's an emergency …And most likely, the worst possible kind."

And Kotori, said with an unusually panicked voice.

"Huh…? What is…?"

And. From behind, *step*, the sound of a foot firmly stepping onto the ground, Shidou shook his shoulders.

Timidly, he turned around his head to look backwards.

And over there was— an unexpected face.

"To-Tohka……?"

His eyes widened as he called the name of the girl who was standing there.

Yes, the person standing over there right now was Tohka, who should have evacuated to the Raizen high school underground shelter.

And what's more, maybe it was due to the falling rain, her body was dripping wet. As if she had been running at full speed just now, she was now breathing heavily.

"——shidou."

As if to obstruct Shidou's process of thought, Tohka's body swayed, and while swaying she let out her voice.

He wondered why— with her only just calling his name, caused shivers to run down his spine.

"……What did you do just now?"

"……Eh? Wha-What do you mean…?"

At that question he touched his lips without thinking— and immediately regaining his thoughts he put his hands behind his back.

But Tohka, wasn't pleased with that response, while making an expression like a grumbling kid, she squeezed out her shaking voice from deep down her throat.

"—Aft-After making me so worried……"

"Eh……?"

"What are you doing flirting around with a girlllllllll!!!!!!!!"

STOMP————!!

Tohka shouted, and the moment her foot struck the ground, in the middle of the floor where she stood *CLANG*!And, it collapsed forming a small crater; cracks were spreading outwards from the epicenter.

"Wha-Whahwahwah……!"

Due to the sudden situation, Shidou opened his eyes wide and shuddered in fear.

An ordinary high school girl, couldn't break the floor simply by just stomping on the floor.

And of course although Tohka wasn't an ordinary high school girl…her Spirit power should have now been sealed— Following that logic, in this current situation the power she was displaying should only be her physical strength...

"Wha-What does this mean, Kotori……?"

When he asked that, Kotori replied with a sigh through the intercam.

"That's why……this is what we've been trying to tell you from before. Between Shidou and Tohka a link is passing through you two, and if Tohka's mental state becomes unstable, we fear that some of her powers will reverse back into her."

"H-Huh? What do you mean by that, are you saying that Tohka's mental state is now unstable?"

"Yes. And so, before this situation gets any worse, you should fix Tohka's mood somehow."

"E-Even if you say that how am I supposed to do—"

During the time he was saying that, Tohka managed to reach the base of the jungle gym where Shidou and [Yoshinon] were entangled.

And then she alternated her piercing gaze between the both of them, [mumumu…] she murmured while remaining tightlipped.

Then, *glare*! sending a look towards Shidou, followed by a glare at [Yoshinon] she extended a pointed finger at her.

"…shidou. The important task you said you had to do, was it to meet with this girl here?"

"Ah, no, about that…"

No well, although according to those words, it was certainly true but should he reply with a 'Yes' now, he was in doubt whether to tell Tohka his true intentions or not.

And, that time.

"……Iyaa,iyaa……I get it now…"

The [Yoshinon] who had been staring blankly at Tohka since she first made her appearance, let out its high-pitched voice.

On the Puppet's rabbit face, was a prankster like smile- he wondered how that got there.

"Onee-san? Err——"

"……It's Tohka."

When the puppet said that, Tohka replied in a discouraging tone.

"Then Tohka-chan~ Although I feel bad for you but it would seem that Shidou-kun has lost interest in you."

"Wha—?"

"—!?"

Tohka and Shidou both gasped at the same time, and then faced towards the puppet.

"Iiyaa see, how do I put it? Hearing your conversation, it looks like he broke Tohka-chan's promise and then came to visit Yoshinon right? Isn't this crux of the story?"

"……Uh."

Tohka twitched her shoulders, and made a face like she could cry at any moment.

"Yo-You, what are you sayin——mguhhhh!?"

When Shidou raised his voice towards the Puppets remark—— Tohka, *grab*, grabbed him by the mouth with both hands.

"Will you keep quiet for a while shidou?"

While releasing a force that would not allow him to consent or refuse, using an unbelievable amount of strength she *grind* *grind* clamped her grip on his cheekbone.

"……! ……!"

The puppet was in a pleasant mood and with an [it can't be helped like] tone, continued speaking.

"Iiyaa—, Sis—, sorry, but this is probably Yoshinon's fault~ her appearance is too charming~"

"Gu-Gugu……"

"It really isn't that I am talking bad about Tohka-chan you know? Buut~ I can't really blame Shidou-kun for leaving behind Tohka-chan and running towards Yoshinon~"



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"U-Ugahhh!!"

For a period of time, while Tohka was still gripping onto Shidou's face and suppressing her trembling shoulders, having reached her limits she screamed.

And finally, she took her hands off of Shidou's face.

"Sh-Shut up! Shutup shutup shutup! That's no good! That kind of thing is no good!"

"Eehh—, even if say it's no good. HoraaHoraa, Shidou-kun how about saying it clearly, that Tohka-chan is already an unwanted child."

"—!"

That instant, Tohka suddenly grabbed onto the puppets collar.

And of course since the puppet was small, it was easily removed from the girls hand, it was then held up in the air.

"—!?"

And, to the girl that had her puppet taken away from her, her eyes began to swirl.

The next moment her eyeballs flickered, her face turned pale white, and sweat appeared on her face. Incidentally it was visible that her breathing has gotten rougher, and her fingers *Twitch* *Twitch* started to shake.

"Yo-Yoshinon……?"

Shidou, while he was rubbing his cheeks that were still in pain, and to the [Yoshinon] that had shown such a fast change, he gave a worried look.

But, it would seems that Tohka did not realize the state that [Yoshinon] was in. Her attention was on the puppet that she was grabbing onto with both her hands, like a knife she gave a sharp gaze, and drew closer to it.

"I……I am NOT an unwanted child! …shidou said… …shidou said that I… He said that it was okay for me to be here! Anymore insults and I will not forgive you! HEY! How about saying something!?"

Probably thinking that the puppet was the one that let out the voice, she grabbed the neck of the rabbit, and shook it.

"……! ……!"

Looking on at that situation, [Yoshinon] began letting out a cry that doesn't sound like a voice.

As if the calm demeanor she held just now was a lie, her whole body was trembling like a Chihuahua.[2B 6]

And then [Yoshinon], fixing back her hood to cover her eyes as if she were trying to avoid being seen, in a nervous manner, she tugged at Tohka's shirt.

"Nu. Wha-What? Don't disturb me. I am talking to this guy right here, right now."

"——Gii…ve…back…please……"

To try and take back the puppet, that Tohka was lifting high up with both her hands, [Yoshinon] *Hop* *Hop* was jumping up and down.

Speaking of which, it might be the first time since yesterday that he had heard her real voice.

"—What are you doing Shidou? Yoshinon's mental condition is deteriorating. Hurry up and stop it!"

And, from his right ear, Kotori's voice echoed.

While scratching his cheek Shidou, spoke timidly with his voice shaking:

"H-Hey…Tohka. Err……that…will you give that back to her?"

"……Uh!"

When he did that Tohka, at Shidou's words, her eyes opened wide in a shock.

"shidou……As I thought…you picked this girl instead of me…..."

"Ha…huh? No, it isn't about that—"

And, at the same time.

"……[Zadkiel]……"

"—!"

As he thought that, [Yoshinon] suddenly raised her right hand into the air and then swung it down, right below her.

In an instant, from the floor it broke through— a giant doll appeared at that spot.

"Wha…!?"

The whole body should be around 3 meters in length; in short it was a plushie toy that took the size of fully sized ragdoll. The outer body was made of smooth gold like material, and white patterns were carved here and there on it.

And also at the part that appears to be its head, a long rabbit like ears could be glimpsed.

"A d-doll……!?"

"—Wha...is this—!?"

Shidou and Tohka, let out their voices at the same time.

[Yoshinon], clinging onto the back of the doll that appeared right under her own feet, and in the two holes located on its back she inserted both her legs into them.

The next moment— the dolls eyes shone red, and while shaking its slow-witted like body, *Guooooooooooooooooo*, it raised a low roar.

And together with that, white smoke started coming out from the body of the doll.

"Cold……!?"

He drew back his legs without thinking.

That smoke, was similar to liquid nitrogen, was something at subzero temperatures.

"—The manifestation of the Angel at this time…!? Shidou, this is bad, run away!"

"Huh...huh……!? Wh-What is an Angel!!"

Suddenly Kotori's shout echoed into his right ear, he then raised a loud voice without thinking.

"It appeared right in front of you right! The absolute shield that protects the Spirits and coming together with the AstralDress it becomes the strongest lance! Making a

Spirit into a Spirit [the miracle that holds a shape]! Did you already forget about Tohka's [Sandalphon]!?"

[Sandalphon]. At that name, Shidou moved his eyebrows in shock.

Last month. It was something that manifested when Tohka still had her Spirit powers, a giant throne and a sword.

With this event being shown. It was unusually simple.

That is to say— even though they kissed. He couldn't seal the Spirit powers.

Thus, when he thought that [Yoshinon] pulled her hands back, the doll— [Zadkiel] together with a low roar, bent its body.

When it did that, the department store's windows started breaking, one window after another, and allowing rain to enter and land on the interior shop floor.

No— to be precise, it was a little different.

It wasn't that the windows broke which allowed the rain to enter, it felt more like, the raindrops pelted the window glass with tremendous force from outside until it forced its way in.

"Eh……!?"

Shidou opened his eyes wide in shock, and while his legs were trembling, he looked at the doll rising in front of him. —*Twist*, the doll turned its face towards Tohka.

"……! Tohka!"

Shidou shouted quickly and pulled Tohka's hand, and while he was holding on to her body he caused them to fall to the ground.

"Wha……shidou!?"

Tohka's voice shook his eardrums. However, at the same time as she spoke, in the place where Tohka was standing moments ago, a large number of bullet like objects zoomed passed.

All those bullets showily pierced through the merchandise shelves around them, after that all of it turned into transparent liquid and flowed onto the ground.

"Ra-Rain…!?"

Yes. From the broken windows, hardened raindrops like hailstones, ignored gravity and were released at Tohka.

And— over there, [Zadkiel] driven by [Yoshinon] moved.

"…Uh."

In an instant to protect Tohka, he turned his back towards [Zadkiel].

But, [Zadkiel] kicked the ground performing a keen maneuver that did not match to its slow moving silhouette, it passed through the spot where Tohka was at just now, and just like that it jumped outdoors through the broken windows.

At the midway point of this maneuver— the puppet that fell on the ground from Tohka's hand, was eaten up into the mouth area of the doll.

"……"

Shortly afterwards, Shidou turned his back and his sights away from [Yoshinon], he opened his mouth a little.

"W-We are safe…right?"

"……Yes. The signal has completely withdrawn. You are quite rash aren't you, Shidou?"

From his right ear, he heard that voice.

"Iiya…but why did that suddenly—"

While he was in the middle of speaking—

"Enough is enough hurry up and get away……!"

His face got pushed away and Shidou *Flip* rolled onto the ground from that spot.

"Nowah…!?"

There was no need to think of the reason. It was Tohka who was in Shidou's arms just now.

Her face was blushing and she was clenching her teeth, she made an expression equal to a spoiled child, she then with her shoulders shaking angrily, stood up.

"To-Tohka…?"

"…! Don't touch me!"

"Ouch…"

Shidou frowned without thinking, and then when he withdrew his hands, in that instant Tohka made a surprised face.

But immediately after that she became [mumumu……] ,*pui* and she turned her face away.

"Wha-What happened to you, Tohka…?"

"Shut up! Don't talk to me! I-Instead of me, that girl is more important right…!"

"H-Huh…? What are you sayin—"

When Shidou made a dumbfounded voice, Tohka started kicking the ground with frustration.

"U-U-U-UUuuuuuuuuuuuu—!!"

"Wai…… Uwaa…!?"

With each kick, another crack was put into the floor, and it caved in.

Shidou who could no longer sustain his balance, rolled down into the hole.

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Part 7

"—All members of AST report in. There is movement by the Spirit. Resume attack at will when sighted."

From her eardrums, Origami's whole body that was wrapped in a wiring suit, heard the transmitted incoming communication.

"—Roger."

When Origami replied, she fixed her firing posture with both her hands gripping the Anti-Spirit Gatling gun [Auldist].

The latest equipment, a long-range type weapon designed to rapidly fire a large numbers of bullets from outside the opponent's range.

The rain that started falling at the same time as when [Hermit] appeared, which had been bouncing off the outer surface of her personal territory, had not affected their preparations outside the building, as she continued gazing at the Spirit readings that was directly being shown onto her retina.

In that instant.

—*GON*, together with that sound, the Spirit blasted a hole in the building wall, and a cloud of dust was raised.

At the same time together with all that, the Spirit readings lit up on the retina screen.

"—Fire!"

At the same time as the echo of captain Ryouko's command, Origami and the others pulled their triggers all at once.

A terrible rumbling sound resounded as the building was riddled by hundreds of bullets, and a dreadful cloud dust was raised into the air.

"……"

Origami, while still resting her finger on the trigger, narrowed her eyes.

Due to her Territory providing her with enhanced superhuman eyesight, she caught sight of a shadow moving at high speed within the cloud of dust.

Origami while remaining silent issued out her orders from inside her mind.

As if responding to her will, the small missiles located within the leg compartments of her equipment activated, from the left and right leg, each loaded with 10 rounds, homing missiles were launched aimed at [Hermit].

"—!?"

The Spirit who was in the middle of having Anti Spirit Gatling bullets shot at her— the [Hermit], immediately turned her eyes towards the homing missiles that were approaching her, and made a surprised expression.

"—!"

When [Hermit] pulled both her hands, the doll lightly danced into the air, and shook off the pursuing homing missiles.

But, by that time it was already too late, the remaining AST members, had locked on to the Spirit's figure.

From behind the homing missiles, and with the barrage of Gatling bullets coming from all directions. Avoiding all of that would be impossible.

"Kya——!"

At the same time, Origami heard a small cry from somewhere with her superhearing, a tremendously loud explosion occurred where all the bullets had impacted at once.

Most probably, most of the attacks would be nullified by the AstralDress that was covering the Spirit— even the [Hermit] would most likely come out uninjured not to mention a [Princess] class Spirit.

Currently, at the point of impact, they confirmed that the giant doll was falling down.

"——Okay! Don't rest your hands from attacking! Shoot! Shoot!"

Ryouko's orders echoed. But——

The finger that Origami was resting on the trigger twitched.

They confirmed that the Spirit body of the giant doll vanished and dissolved into space.

"We Lost……her?"

From someone's whisper, had been sent and heard by the entire AST team members.

When the Spirit returns to the other side, which they called the other dimension- they classify it as [Lost].

Although the AST had the goal of eliminating the Spirits with military power, it is incredibly hard to completely defeat a Spirit which has huge battle abilities; generally when this [Lost] condition occurs, the operation has been deemed a success.

And, therefore, the clouds drifted away and daylight shone down.

The rain that was hitting the Territory stopped promptly.

"—All members, we're all returning to base."

"……"

From Ryouko's voice, Origami lowered her gun muzzle, and deactivated her weapon systems.

But, during the time when she followed Ryouko's back and returned to base—

"……?"

From her eyesight that was improved because of her Territory, something peculiar caught her eye, she lowered her altitude temporarily to investigate.

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Chapter 3: Excessively Distorted Compassion

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Part 1

"Hey, Tohkaa~……"

While letting out a perplexed voice, Shidou *knock* *knock*, knocked on the door.

But…there was no response.

"Tohka……I'm begging you, hear me out on what I have to say."

Once more, he said that while knocking on the door.

When he did that— *Don!* A loud sound occurred and the whole house shook.

"…Uh!"

Due to the sudden noise, he twitched his shoulders in reflex.

And, from the door that Shidou had been knocking on, a mumbling voice echoed.

"……Fuun. Don't bother me……Hurry up and go to that side Idiot –Idiot."

And with that response the matter ended like that. Tohka was completely sulking.

"Haaaah…What am I supposed to do…?"

Shidou was completely at a loss, he sighed gloomily while rubbing his brows with his fingers.

Shidou was currently in front of a door located in the deepest part of the 2nd floor in the Itsuka residence, there was the word [Tohka] scribbled on paper and pasted to the door.

It had been 5 hours since [Yoshinon] went back to the other world.

After that, he was retrieved by <Fraxinus>, and went back to his house, which was a good thing. But, upon entering the house he found that Tohka had locked herself inside her room and refused to come out.

"—Shidou. Got a moment? There is something I want to confirm."

From the intercam that was on his right ear came Kotori’s voice.

"Ah……? What now, this isn't the right time for that—"

"Shidou, you really did kiss Yoshinon properly, right?"

"……Uh, huh? What's this all of a sudden……?"

From the sudden question, Shidou made a shrill voice.

"Just answer, at that time Shidou and Yoshinon's lips met together. That isn't a mistake, correct?"

"……Ah, yeaah……"

"Fumu……"

"S-So what's wrong with that? I'm saying this first, that was completely an accident —"

"I know that. Instead of that, I would even praise you for achieving the goal we were aiming for."

"…Then what is it?"

When Shidou asked, Kotori after groaning [umu] replied:

"—It would seem that even though you kissed, you couldn't seal any of the Spirit's power at all."

After being told that Shidou's eyes widened.

That's right. Even after kissing [Yoshinon], she was still using her Spirit powers.

"Well, the affection level wasn't raised as high as that time with Tohka and of course sealing all of the power is impossible, but even so— it is a little concerning that not even a little bit of it could be sealed. In numerical values, I thought that even at that stage it would be divided by 2 or even 3."

After saying that, she once again returned to talking to herself.

"…Somehow either Yoshinon has a hidden special ability, or—"

"Hey, HHeeeeyyyy, Kotori. I think Yoshinon is also a big problem but……err."

While saying that, Shidou had his eyes turned towards Tohka's door.

Kotori probably guessed what Shidou was thinking and replied immediately.

"—Ahh, it's about Tohka, huh? How is her condition now?"

"Just like what you can see……I was trying to talk to her just now, but it was no good."

"I see. From seeing the numerical values it would seem that her powers temporarily resurfaced, though then they flowed back into the Pass and are once again sealed. But...it would be better if you hurried up and fixed her mood."

"Her mood……but how?"

"……Shin. If it's okay with you, would you leave this problem to me?"

After Shidou asked, he heard a strangely sleepy voice from the intercam— It was Reine.

"Eh…?"

"……As expected, she is getting worked up about that. If I am not mistaken, tomorrow is a Saturday. Would you mind leaving Tohka to me in the afternoon? Let's see……How about you let us go out and buy the groceries?"

"I don’t mind but what is this about all of a sudden?"

A few moments after Shidou asked, Reine let out a sigh.

"……With things like this, it is better if the person concerned is not there. These are delicate traits of a woman’s heart. Please remember that."

Shin

"Ha-Haaa……"

Shidou, scratched his cheek with a confused feeling.

Part 2

"……And so, that's about it, Tohka. I am thinking of going out shopping, would you mind accompanying me?"

The next day, 13th of May (Saturday) 10 A.M.

Just like what she said yesterday, Reine visited the Itsuka house and said those words in front of Tohka’s room.

Her current attire wasn't the usual white robe or the army uniform. From her chest pocket a stuffed bear covered in scars was peeping out from the jersey like clothing with dark colored bottom. There was also a bag on her shoulder, showing that she was planning to go out and buy something.

But Tohka was the same as yesterday, and from beyond the door echoed an irritated voice.

"Shut up, leave me alone……!"

She still sounded angry. Shidou, who was standing right beside Reine let out a sigh.

"She has been like this since yesterday."

"……Fumu."

Reine put her hand on her chin to show that she was thinking.

And then from the bag, she brought out a terminal like computer, and started fiddling around with it using her other hand.

After looking at the terminal screen, she closed it and stepped forward towards the door.

"……Tohka."

"I told you to leave me alone……! I wa—"

"……I am thinking of eating something outside while shopping. How about it?"

When Reine said that, Tohka was unexpectedly silent.

And then, after 10 seconds.

…

Creak

The bedroom door opened, and from inside Tohka's angry face popped out.

She probably hadn't changed her clothes since yesterday; she was still dressed in her high school uniform. What's more her clothes were still wet. Speaking of which, maybe she hadn't slept, there were dark circles under her eyes. If she were to walk beside Reine, others would say they were sisters.

"Wha…?"

Shidou opened his eyes wide in surprise.

"Re-Reine-san……? What on earth did you do……?"

"……Nothing. It's because her hunger value is rising. I thought it is probably about time that she is reaching her limits now."

"I see……eh, yesterday night I tried calling her out for supper but she didn't come out…"

"……That is well; she probably doesn't want to see your face."

"……"

And he was told such harsh words directly and plainly.

But, it was the truth. Tohka, who had finally come outside, upon seeing Shidou *pui* she turned her face away, and walked away with heavy steps.

"Hurry up and let's go!"

"……Un, let's do that. Rain has also been falling since this morning. Please do not forget to bring an umbrella."

While saying that, Reine made eye contact with Shidou that seemed to say [Leave this to me].

"……I-I'm counting on you."

The only thing Shidou could do was to send both of them off.

And just like that he was standing there dazed for a few minutes.

"Errrr……"

But, he immediately realized he was wasting his time. He lightly pulled his cheek to regain his composure and then descended the stairs.

"It's a day off from school after all……I guess I'll go shopping in the afternoon too."

He planned to go shopping yesterday right after school, but because of various things he couldn't go.

Shidou hurriedly finished dressing, and left the house taking an umbrella with him.

"Umbrella— well, I'll hang on to it just in case, since Kotori is still sleeping."

After opening the umbrella and saying that, Shidou made footprints on the road of rain.

—And then, wondering how long he spent walking.

"……Uh!?"

In the middle of walking to the shopping street, he noticed the back of someone he recognized. Shidou then stopped his legs.

That was, because he found someone with rabbit like ears attached to a green colored hood.

"Yo-Yoshinon……?"

Shidou, raised his eyebrows as that name came out of his mouth.

Yes, due to the area being destroyed by yesterday’s spacequake, from over the other side of the prohibit entry sign that was placed up, the Spirit [Yoshinon]'s figure was there.

Shidou hid his body behind the wall, observing [Yoshinon].

"The alarm……didn't ring……Eh, the same pattern with Tohka at that time, huh."

Speaking of that, when he encountered [Yoshinon] the first time, the alarm wasn't ringing. Maybe because, she was a Spirit that frequently comes and goes to this dimension from the other world.

"……But, what is the best thing to do now…?"

Now that he found her, there was no way he could ignore her now— he did not know what kind of action he should take.

After Shidou took some time pondering over his thoughts— he pushed the buttons on his cell phone.

After hearing the calling tone going on for a while, he heard a sleepy voice from his cell phone receiver.

"……Fua~i……Hello……? Onii-chan……?"

It was clearly the sound of her just waking up. And of course, it was Shidou's sister, Kotori.

"Hey. Good morning Kotori."

"Unn-……Gud morning. What's wrong……?"

"…It's an emergency. I found Yoshinon."

"……"

The moment Shidou said that, on the other side of his cell phone, *Pachin!* *Pachin!*, he heard the sound of cheeks being hit with all her might.

And right after that a dignified voice, that he knew and at the same time doesn't, echoed.

"—Tell me about the whole situation in detail."

"Y-Yeah."

While being a little overpowered by the sudden change, Shidou explained the current situation in a simple manner.

"……I see. Another quiet appearance huh? This is troubling— So, Shidou's existence hasn't been discovered by the Spirit yet, right?"

"Aahhh……I think so. What should I do?"

"Do you have the intercam?"

"Eh? Aah— yeah just in case."

Shidou, lightly felt his pocket to confirm the feeling of the small device was there.

Since the affair with Tohka, he was told to carry one just in case there was a problem.

"That is good. Wear that. Don't lose sight of the Spirit and standby for orders."

"Eh? Wai—"

—— *snap* *toot*,*toot*,*toot*. The call disconnected.

"Sta-Stand by……"

From the careless instructions, he raised his eyebrows.

Since, there was nothing else he could do. He quietly put the intercam onto his ear, and peeked at [Yoshinon]'s condition.

After 5 minutes had past, from the intercam he heard his precious little sister's voice.

Apparently she had finished her preparation in a short time, and then moved towards <Fraxinus>.

"—Can you hear me? Shidou."

"……Yeah, I can hear you."

"We can't leave her alone if this continues. For now let's make contact first."

"……Understood."

After taking a good breathes, he steadily walked towards [Yoshinon].

Even now [Yoshinon] was not in the state to realize Shidou was there, she was desperately looking at the ground.

"……Well then, talk to her."

"Eeh...Pl-Please wait a second."

Because of Shidou approaching the Spirit, a window was displayed on the bridges main monitor.

①**The same time when trying to talk to her, face upwards after rolling over then show your stomach, to show that you have no hostility towards her.**

②**Immediately hug her tightly, to tell her the love from this side.**

③**To show that you are unarmed, talk to her after getting stark-naked.**

The method to avoid provoking the Spirit, were shown in 3 patterns.

"*Tsk* Although it hurts to not have Reine here, it can't be helped."

Kotori, after taking a glimpse at the vacant seat on the lower bridge, she clicked her tongue.

Currently, Reine should be taking Tohka shopping right now. They also couldn't take the chance of abandoning Tohka and lowering her mood even further.

"—All members, choose!"

Together with that order, from the display on Kotori's hand, the crew's choices appeared on it.

—①,②,③. All together, almost all the votes of that amount were gathered.

"*Tsk* It’s a little broken."

While Kotori was murmuring frustrated, voices from the lower bridge echoed.

"It should be ①! To animals, exposing the stomach is the pose for surrender! The other party would feel safer!"

"Ridiculous! Obviously ② is the decided one! Rabbits die when they are lonely!"

"That is just a girl wearing a rabbit hood— it’s not even a real rabbit anyway! Leaving that aside commander, it's choice number ③!, to show that there is no ulterior motive from this side— it is to go naked, there are no other choices than being naked!"

"Shut up old hag! You only just wanted to see a naked high school boy!"

"Wha……? Uh, what a rude remark! Don’t you know!? When persuading a primitive man that has been brought back to modern times, to be fully naked is the most effective way to go!"

"What kind of talk is that! Anyways it's ② pick ②!"

"No, it must be ①!"

"Naked! Naked!"

"……Quiet!"

Bam!, the console got hit, and the crew that were getting heated, got yelled at.

And inside the quiet downed bridge, she slowly took the mike and—

"——Shidou, before talking to her, take off your shirt."

She calmly, said that.

Then from the lower bridge, a few numbers of female crew members, and for some weird reason one male crew member, did a Guts pose [2C 1]..

But—

"No way!"

Shidou's shout echoed at the same time as it being delivered via the speaker.

"—!?"

The [Yoshinon] in the screen, *piku* twitched her shoulders in surprise.

"……! This is bad."

The moment Shidou let out his shout, [Yoshinon], turned towards him with a trembling motion.

Her face turning pale and her teeth made clattering sounds, her whole body started to tremble.

"…….Hi, i……u"

And thus, she was making a face showing that she would cry at any moment now and immediately raised her right hand high up.

Shidou's heart constricted as if were being squeezed by an illusionary hand.

He had memories about that movement. Yesterday, [Yoshinon] was behaving like this when the giant doll manifested.

"Wai…, Wait! Calm down!"

But, even if as he said, that there was no way they could communicate.

When Kotori also realized what [Yoshinon] was trying to do, she too shouted out.

"Shidou! For now if you still have time ——pick ①! Show her your stomach and roll over!"

"Hu,——Haaaaah……!?"

"Hurry!"

There was no other way.

After Shidou threw his umbrella on the ground, on the road wet with the rain, *Roll*, he threw himself down and rolled.

"I give up, I surrender."

"……!?"

At that instant, when [Yoshinon] was going to swing her hands down, she made a dumbfounded face.

And then, timidly, she slowly lowered her hand to its original position, and started examining Shidou's current state.

"……D-Did we……succeed?"

"—Probably, try talking to her while you avoid provoking her."

Being told that, Shidou who was still rolled over, slowly raised his neck.

"……Y-Yo……"

"……"

Even when he tried talking to her, [Yoshinon] continued staring at him in full alert mode.

"Wha-What is wrong with today……?"

"……"

"T-This is some amazing rain……"

"……"

Nothing, there were no replies coming back.

"……What am I going to do about this?"

Shidou tried tilting his head to the side.

It might be a mistake but— right now, he thought that he could see [Yoshinon]'s left hand.

Meaning, she was not wearing her puppet.

At the same time Shidou was raising his eyebrows in doubt, once again a restraining voice echoed from Kotori.

And again choices appeared on the <Fraxinus> monitors.

①**Walk and approach her while talking in a tenacious way, and fill in the gap of the distance.**

②**To regain normal composure, temporarily retreat.**

③**Ask her why she is not wearing her puppet.**

"Fumu……"

After looking at the total results from the crew members, that were being shown in the small display on her hand, Kotori made a small hum.

The most common one was, ③. As expected everyone, realized that she was not wearing her puppet.

And certainly it was also a matter that even Kotori wanted to find out.

"Shidou, pick ③. She might have lost her puppet, and is probably now looking for it. It was about time to get a reaction anyway, try asking her about the puppet."

"……Understood."

With Shidou in agreement, he opened his mouth.

"Hey……you, are you perhaps, looking for your puppet……?"

"……!"

The moment Shidou said that, [Yoshinon] immediately opened her eyes wide.

And when he thought that, she ran towards him and she immediately grabbed his head, as if to ask a question she shook his head hard.

"……! ……!?"

"Ah, ouchouchouchouch……! Wait, please stop that."

When he said that, [Yoshinon] steadily removed her hands from Shidou’s head.

Shidou got up while looking at the girl, and he then tried asking again.

"As expected……you were looking for it."

And [Yoshinon] kept nodding her head hard.

After that, she looked at Shidou with very worried eyes. It was as if, she was asking for the whereabouts of the puppet.

"……Uh, so-sorry. I don’t know where it is too……"

When Shidou said that, [Yoshinon] made a face as if the world is about to end, and losing her strength she sank down on the floor.

And just like that she hung her head low, [ue……, e……] and the sounds of weeping started to leak out.

"Er, errrrr……"

If she were to go on a rampage it would be troubling, but this was also troubling in its own way. Shidou quickly fell into a panic with his sights wandering around.

"——Calm down, Shidou."

And, the honest voice of Kotori got delivered into his eardrums.

Receiving [Yoshinon]'s reaction, the window was deployed on the screen for the 3rd time.

① **"That kind of guy, I will make you forget about him"** appeal to her as a reliable man.

② **"Together with me, let's go find the puppet"** appeal to her as a kind man.

③ **"Actually I am the puppet all along!"** appeal to her as a man filled with a humorous sense.

"All members, your choices!"

When Kotori sent out that order, the total results were shown on her small-scaled display.

The most votes were on ②, the next was ①. And only one vote was on ③.

"Well, ② is the safest choice. ……but who was the person that picked something like number ③."

"……Is it a bad choice then?"

From behind, Kannazuki’s dispirited voice mumbled.

"……"

Kotori ignored him and pulled the mike towards her.

"Shidou, accompany her to look for that puppet."

And from behind, [aah, an ignoring play is also not that bad too……!] was heard but, she ignored it.

"Er,erm about this, Yoshinon."

"……!"

The moment Shidou raised his voice, [Yoshinon]'s body shook in surprise again.

And when she immediately waved her hands, the water puddles around her rose up, forming like bullets that exploded near the place that Shidou was sitting down.

"No……nowaa!?"

Without thinking, his body cramped.

"So-sorry! I didn’t mean to scare you!"

As if to examine the condition on his side, without lowering his guard he cautiously looked over there (……comparatively, when their eyes met she would look away) to [Yoshinon], he fixed his posture and lowered his head a little.

And then to show that there will not be any resistance he raised both of his hands up, then continued his words.

"Err……I-If it is okay…….I, will also help to search for the puppet with you?"

"……!"

The moment Shidou said that, [Yoshinon] opened her eyes wide in surprise.

After a few seconds, and for the first time her face turned very bright, *um* *um* she swung her head hard up and down.

After Shidou exhaled an [okay], he finally raised his hips up from the wet ground.

It was quite wet but, well, now wasn't the time to care about it.

"Ermmmm……soo, about that. The puppet, where and when did you lose it?"

When asked, as if she was hesitating [Yoshinon] eyes wandered around, and then she opened her cherry blossom colored lips.

"……Yes…terday……"

And then, she pulled the rabbit ears that were stuck on the hood and covered her face, while hiding her eyes she carried on talking awkwardly.

"The scary……people, when I realized……we were……attacked, I lost it……"

"Hmmm……? You, were attacked by the AST huh?"

When Shidou said that, [Yoshinon] threw her head down vertically.

"I see, it was after that……"

While Shidou was talking, he looked around by craning his neck to the left then right.

Whether it was destroyed buildings or cracked roads, he expanded his full view as much as possible. This was going to be a hard task.

And, as if matching together with that reaction, from his right ear sounds were delivered from <Fraxinus>.

"——We will send you as many cameras as we have. Try to communicate with her as much as you can while searching."

To show that Shidou understood, he poked the intercam a little, and once again brought his eyes to [Yoshinon].

"Okay……now then, let's start searching, Yoshinon."

"……!"

[Yoshinon] consented——after mumbling a little in her mouth, she let out her voice.

"I, I am……"

"Eh?"

"I……am, not Yoshinon,……but Yoshino. Yoshinon……is my, friend……"

"Yoshino……?"

When Shidou replied her by saying her name, the girl— Yoshino tried to run away.

"Ah……wait!"

And, probably she was surprised by that voice, Yoshino twitched her shoulders again.

At that instant, the rain surrounding Yoshino suddenly turned into something like needles and flew towards Shidou.

"Uwaaaaaaaa!?"

He lowered his head on the spot in panic, and managed to somehow dodge them.

It was okay since there were just few. But, if this was shot more towards Shidou's body, he would have been a cactus by now.

"C-Calm down! It’s me it’s me!"

When Yoshino turned this way while twitching, and after seeing Shidou's face, she took a deep breath.

Shidou stood up while talking in a timid tone.

"I-If it is okay use this……although you are already wet, it’s still better than nothing right?"

He picked up the umbrella that he had just thrown away, and gave it to Yoshino.

"? ? ?"

"Aah, this is how you use it."

He grabbed Yoshino's hand while she was tilting her head in curiosity, and then held

it up.

When he did that, she was surprised by the fact that raindrops no longer touched her, and Yoshino looked up with eyes that were turning around in amazement.

The transparent vinyl umbrella was repelling the rain that was falling and hitting it while shining brightly.

"……! ……!"

Yoshino excitedly, flapped her other hand that was not holding the umbrella.

"Y-Yeah, you are happy with it huh? Use it, use it!"

And after Shidou said that, Yoshino turned her eyes to Shidou as if she was asking him.

"Ah……? Me?"

Yoshino nodded her head repeatedly.

"Aah, I'm okay. It's okay just use it."

After hesitatingly looking at the umbrella and then to Shidou for a few moments.

"Th……ank, y……ou."

And after she bowed and lowered her head, they continued their search for the puppet.

"Doing something cool like that."

From his right ear, he heard Kotori teasing like voice.

"S-Shut up."

"—Well, if the Spirit's feels like it, something like a wet shirt could immediately be dried though. But even before that, she has no difficulty making rain bullets from the invisible film that she set up."

"I-Is that right?"

……Well, that wasn't really a problem. He just could not bear to watch, a little

girl getting soaked by the rain.

Shidou lightly wiped his wet face, and began the search.

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Part 3

"—How did it go? Did you find the puppet?"

"No, not yet. We haven't found it yet."

When Kotori asked the question, she heard a reply from a crewman down at the lower bridge.

The time was now 12:30 p.m. It has been almost 2 hours since Shidou and Yoshino started their search. If they continue working under this rain, their bodies would get too cold and, their fatigue would also accumulate.

It would have been okay if [Ratatoskr] were able to send in the mechanics department members too but— it would be dangerous if too many people were to be thrown into the search, they might scare Yoshino and then they might lose everything. Even if she wasn’t scared by them, there was a chance that her good impressions that was supposed to only go to Shidou, would be spread in multiple directions.

"How about the images?"

Kotoris eyes turned to her right hand side, and the crews that were fiddling with their consoles, without looking away, replied back.

"The resolution is a little rough but……we can manage somehow."

"Then bring it up on the monitor."

Kotori said that, and on one part of the <Fraxinus> bridge monitor, images of the area from around the time of yesterday's battle between the AST and Yoshino were being projected.

It was like it was dragged into the aftershock of the battle, the camera took some distance to get a better picture of the area, and compared to the resolution from just now the image quality now was quite bad.

"She no longer has the puppet—— in the image of when the Spirit was lost."

After a while, the image enlarged and close-upped on Yoshino.

"——Turn it back, the image from just before the AST attacks land, we are able to confirm that the puppet is in the Angels mouth. It is right to think that it was lost during that attack."

"So, where's the important puppet?"

"Because of the smoke getting thicker, although I can't say that it is for certain but……I can confirm the shadow of it falling off, I think the worst case scenario of it being burnt up because of that attack has been avoided."

"Fumu……"

Kotori used her hands and hit her jaw.

"Right after when Yoshino was Lost, aren't there anymore images left of the surroundings?"

"I-I will try looking for it."

And, at that moment the speaker went, *riiinnnngg* such a sound leaked out and she heard it.

"Yoshino?"

"……!"

It had been almost 3 hours, since they began searching for the puppet.

While Shidou was combing up his wet hair, he looked at Yoshino beside him who was still looking for the puppet.

It would seem that he realized an amazingly cute voice echoed.

Yoshino once again as she was scared, she twitched her shoulder— maybe she got a little used to Shidou's voice, this time she didn't make needle water bullets and shoot them.

"……Are you hungry?"

When Shidou asked, Yoshino face turned red and *pun* *pun* swung her head from side to side.

But, at that timing, her stomach grumbled.

"……!"

It would seem that Spirits get hungry too.

He heard that for the life form called Spirit, all it needed for sustenance was Spirit energy but… …speaking of which, after Tohka's power was sealed she became very gluttonous.

"……What am I supposed to do."

Although he doesn't know how long it has been since Yoshino started searching for the puppet, but since it was already past noon, it would be weird not to be hungry. Shidou's stomach was a little empty too.

Using his finger, Shidou gave his intercam a small poke, and a voice from Kotori that had already guessed what subject he was about to raise:

"——Hmm I guess so, how about taking a rest while having lunch?"

"Un……I guess you're right."

After making a light stretch he said to Yoshino.

"Yoshino, let's take a rest, okay?"

When Shidou said that, Yoshino swung her head sideways. And then her stomach grumbled again.

"……!"

And, after Yoshino had pondered for a while, she finally consented with hesitation.

"Okay, well then……"

After saying that, Shidou rearranged his thoughts.

He had his wallet just in case but if he was this wet, it would be difficult to enter a shop.

Shidou placed his hand on his face for a while, and then he poked the intercam.

"……Hey, Kotori. If it's about a resting spot, is our home okay?"

And right after saying that. Kotori made an exaggerated shocked voice.

"Wow. Haven't seen you for quite a while and you turned quite daring. If you are planning on pushing her down please be careful."

"……Hey."

"I know. ……Well, there is no other place to go anyway, I will specially permit it then."

"Roger."

Shidou made a short reply and then, talked to Yoshino.

"Well then……let's go."

Yoshino while remaining silent, gave a small nod.

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Part 4

"……Umu."

While Tohka was rubbing her stomach and sighing, she was following Reine as they walked through town in the rain.

She was feeling somewhat bad from having not eaten anything yesterday afternoon, and for not having slept much.

But, the reason for this uneasiness was not from her lack of sleep or from her empty stomach—Tohka somehow understood that.

"……"

Tohka clenched her teeth, and *splash* kicked the wet ground.

But even if she were to do something like that, there was no way the irritating swirling in the bottom of her stomach would just end.

And Reine who was walking in front of her suddenly stopped walking. Tohka stopped right on the verge of bumping into her.

"……How about we go and have our lunch first. Is this place okay?"

Right in front of them was a building with a colorful signboard. If she wasn't mistaken, this place was a family restaurant.

Tohka made a big nod.

"Un…It would help if you were to do that. My stomach is so empty that I think I am going to die."

"……Well then, let us enter."

When both of them folded their umbrellas and entered the shop, following the shop attendant, they settled down at the end of the non-smoking area.

Immediately, they skimmed through the menu and placed an order.

While waiting for their orders to come, in order to calm her stomach, she drank the water the attendant placed on the table in one gulp.

"……Tohka."

Reine, faced Tohka with her pair of eyes decorated by thick and cloudy eye bags.

"What?"

"……Before the food gets here, I would like to have a little talk……is that okay?"

"Nu…Well, I don't mind but……What kind of talk is it?"

Tohka, in order show that she was alert, she lifted her body from the table and nodded.

The woman known as Murasame Reine was ……hard to understand because she seemed to always be thinking of something—and because of that habit, it felt like she could see through anything—it felt a little irritating.

Whether or not she realized what Tohka was thinking at that moment, Reine remained in a dreamy mood and took out a machine like object from her bag, and then unfolded it on the top of the table.

"What is that?"

"……Aah, please don't mind this."

While saying that, Reine was using her other hand and *click* *click*……and lightly operated it.

She focused intensely on the terminal, filled with curiosity but Tohka finally managed to ignore it, and returned her sights back to Reine.

When she did that, Reine returned her eyes back to Tohka and opened her lips.

"……Well, I am not good at making conversation so I will get straight to the point. Tohka, the reason you are irritated—no, it would be better if you could— can you tell me the reason why you have been irritated and the origin of it?"

"—Kuh."

From Reine's words, Tohka unintentionally gasped.

"Uh, I am not really—"

"……As expected, you can't forgive Shin for meeting up with another woman."

Shin. A nickname only used when referring to Shidou.

"Wha, why did shidou appear right there…"

"……Oya, is it not related to him?"

"……"

Tohka placed her elbow on the table, and then scratched her head in a sign of surrender.

And after making a big sigh, she said in a suffering voice.

"…I don't understand."

"……Don't understand what?"

Reine tilted her head to the side as she replied. And Tohka whose face was down, lifted her face up.

"Umu……Even I don't know myself why it turned into this kind of feeling."

She seemed to be troubled as she continued her words.

"Yesterday……shidou, left the school and——that, kissed or whatever it's called, that girl."

Kiss. Just that single word, caused pain around her chest area.

"……Aah, it would seem so."

"It's not really...It isn't any of my business who shidou meets with and where, and whoever he kisses. I am not supposed to find any faults in it. …But, the moment I saw that, it was already—How should I put it? It was rather—yes, it was a rather bad feeling."

"……Fumu."

"When I realized what had happened……I started raising my voice. What's

more……Right after that, the rabbit said that girl was much more important to him than me……I was already—sad, and scared, to the extent that I couldn't do anything, and I became unable to understand what happened at all……I don't even understand what this means……this is the first time this happened."

And once again she made a big sigh.

"As expected……Is there something wrong with me?"

"……No, you are not sick or anything. That is a normal and healthy response"

"I-Is that so?"

"……Aah, it is nothing to worry about. But——it is better if we clear that misunderstanding first."

"Misunderstanding…?"

"……Aah, regarding that kiss, that was a total accident, and……it doesn't mean that girl is more important to Shin than Tohka."

After Reine said that, she glimpsed at the machine, as Tohka raised her face.

"Uh, re-really…?"

"……It is true."

"Bu-But shidou was…"

"……If he doesn't think of you as someone precious to him, do you think that he would go to the extent of putting his own life in danger just to save you?"

"——Ah…"

After being told that, Tohka was at a loss for words.

She completely forgot about the weird and indescribable swirl of emotion that were affecting her heart and stomach.

—Yesterday, didn't Shidou protect Tohka? Just like last month?

And what's more, in spite of knowing the chances of dying by getting shot by an assassin.

Tohka, while pushing her hands around her chest area, swallowed her saliva.

"……, I—"

I've been so stupid.

Tohka shook her throat to make a groan, and then scratched her head again.

And after that, immediately stood up from her seat.

"……Tohka?"

"Sorry, can we postpone today's shopping to another day?"

Tohka bit her lips before letting out her voice again.

"……I have to, apologize to shidou."

After hitting her jaw with her hands, Reine made a small nod.

"……Then go."

"I am grateful."

Tohka made a short reply and left the family restaurant taking the umbrella in her hands, she ran out into the raining town.

"……Fumu. Well, that is one problem solved……maybe?"

Reine muttered while being left alone, she glanced through some values from the graph being displayed on the small terminal.

The fact that Tohka's mind and body would be disturbed by this incident was expected.

Although she was pouting like a spoiled kid……If Tohka, really did think badly of Shidou, she would not have hated the girl that Shidou met up with.

Speaking in either ways, from the irritating feeling that she couldn't calm down herself, she learned a weird and indescribable terror and uneasiness……speaking of which would be the closest to the truth.

Because of that, even without her mood being fixed, the thought of changing

Tohka's consciousness itself, was not really that difficult.

Yes—but, it was better if she could realize it by herself.

That fact—Shidou protected her, and what kind of meaning that holds, and when the time came, when she found that answer, she would know what she really felt.

"Well, jealousy is also a fine part of love."

She muttered while closing the terminal.

"……But, we have to be careful. That love could also be, the emotion that will destroy the world."

And then,

"——Sorry for the long wait! Here is the double cheese burger set rice with large servings of fried chicken, fried oyster set, mix grill, margarita, and the spaghetti bolognaise. And please be careful of the hot iron plate."

"……Un?"

And from the sudden appearance of the shop attendant, Tohka's high calorie meal was lined up on top of the table.

"Please take your time and enjoy."

The attendant lowered his upper part of his body by an angle of 45 degrees like he was used to it thus making a bow, and then left the spot.

Reine who was left alone, scratched her cheek in front of that abundant amount of food.

"……This is……troubling."

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Part 5

"Let's see……we have eggs, ah, there is also chicken meat. There's some rice left in the rice cooker too……I guess Oyakodon[2C 2] is okay."

He roughly determined what menu to make from looking inside the fridge, and right after taking out the needed ingredients, he took a small peek in the direction of living room.

Over there was Yoshino who was curiously looking around things near her while sitting on the sofa.

When Shidou returned, he immediately changed his clothes but Yoshino's dress was still the same rabbit coat from before. Just as Kotori had said, even after getting bathed by rain, she was not wet at all.

Same as Tohka's light dress, this was probably that AstralDress or something.

"Could you wait for a few moments. I'll be done soon. ——Ah, if you are free you could watch the television."

"……?"

Shidou said that while peeling and chopping the spring onions, Yoshino tilted her head in curiosity.

"Un, there is a remote control there—yes yes, now push the top left button."

Following Shidou's instruction, Yoshino pressed the remote control button.

When she did that, the television along the wall turned on, and *Wahahaha!* such a voice echoed.

"——!"

In that instant, Yoshino's body cowered; the water accumulated in the sink rose, turning into bullets and were shot at the television screen.

"Wha…?"

"You idiot, even though I told you not to scare her."

In his right ear, he heard Kotori's criticizing voice.

And speaking of Yoshino, she opened her eyes that was shut tight, and lowered her head at Shidou in panic.

"N-No……Don’t worry about it. Sorry to have scared you."

Right after Shidou made a dry smile, he resumed with his cooking.

He heated up the pot that has water measured in it, and tossed in the sliced chicken meat and spring onions. And when it reached to a boil, he put in the beaten eggs.

And then he let it flow on top of the rice filled bowl. Finally he scattered Japanese parsley on top of it, and it was complete.

Since he was accustomed to this sort of work, it did not even take 10 minutes for him to finish cooking.

"Here you go, it's done. Let's hurry and fill our stomach so we can go and find Yoshinon okay."

While talking, he held the bowls with both his hands and headed into the living room.

He put one in front of Yoshino and right across her he placed his own portion, and he entered the kitchen again to get a chair, some chopsticks, and a spoon just in case, before returning to the living room.

"Now then, Itadakimasu. [2C 3]."

Shidou clapped his hands together while saying that, and Yoshino imitated that movement then lowered her head.

Then she grabbed the spoon with her hand, took one scoop of Shidou's specialty oyakodon, and transported it into her mouth.

"……!"

When Yoshino did that her eyes immediately opened wide, and *slam* *slam* starting hitting the table.

"Un?"

But when Shidou faced toward her direction, she turned her eyes away in embarrassment.

Afterwards, Yoshino looked like she wanted to tell him something, but instead she made an embarrassed face and found difficulty in putting it into words, *gu* she gave Shidou a thumbs up.

"O-Ou……"

Shidou made a wry smile, and replied back by giving a thumbs up. It would seem that it was to her liking.

She was probably quite hungry; Yoshino opened her small mouth with all her might, and started munching down.

And—by estimating the moment when Yoshino would be finished her meal, Kotori started talking.

"Do you still want to rest? I still want more information if possible from the Spirit. Since this is a good chance, why don't you ask Yoshino how old is she?"

"A question?"

And when Shidou was asking back, Kotori immediately suggested him to ask questions.

"……Aah, I get it."

Shidou, as he had finished his bowl he exhaled a satisfied breath and then turned his eyes towards Yoshino.

"Hey……Yoshino. There are some things I would like to know though—can I ask you a few questions?"

Yoshino tilted her head in curiosity.

"Err…you seem to take care of it very preciously. That puppet—Yoshinon, what kind of existence is that to you…?"

When Yoshino got asked that question, she timidly opened her mouth with difficulty.

"Yoshinon, is ……a frie…nd, and also……a he…ro."

"Hero?"

When asked again, Yoshino nodded.

"Yoshinon is… …my, ideal… …yearnings of… …myself. Unlike me… …not weak, unlike me… …not hesitant… …it's strong, and cool…"

"Your ideal self…huh."

Shidou scratched his cheeks, and recalled back the time when he met Yoshino inside the department store.

Well, certainly the current Yoshino compared to the Yoshino talking through the puppet, from the tone to the attitude it was like she was a different person. But—

"I…like this current Yoshino better though…"

During the time when Tohka appeared, he remembered the numbers of jokes accumulated from the puppet, he made a bitter smile.

Certainly, during that time Yoshino was talking cheerfully but—he could not bear it anymore.

Although it was hard to hear what she was saying, though she was awkward, Yoshino has been honestly answering his questions, and it was a good feeling.

But the moment Shidou said those words, Yoshino's face went *poof*, her face was blushed red. She then hunched her back and used the hood to cover and hide her face.

"Yo-Yoshino…? What's wrong?"

Shidou said that while was trying to peek, Yoshino lowered the hands that was holding onto the hood and, gradually raised her face.

"……Tho, those words, because… …it was the first time… …I have been told."

"I-Is that so…?"

Yoshino made a deep consent.

Well…originally she was a Spirit that has only a few chances at having a conversation with a person. It might be because of something like that.

"Shidou, was that… …in your calculations?"

And, over there Kotori asked such a question.

"Huh? Wha-what calculations…?"

"……Never mind. If that's wasn't then it's okay."

"Ha-Haah…?"

It was his sister that said something that didn't make sense, Shidou knitted his eyebrows.

"Don't mind it. There is not a problem for now—it just unexpected how calm you are, I guess the results of the 'living together training' are starting to show."

"……I wonder."

Shidou replied vaguely. Certainly he was calm to a certain degree but, he could differentiate whether it is from the results of the training or not.

But, he could not afford to be occupied by the other side. Shidou fixed his sights back to Yoshino, and asked the next question.

"So——Err, Yoshino, it seems that even though you were attacked by the AST, you rarely retaliate, what kind of reason do you have for doing that?"

When Yoshino got asked……she looked down again.

Right after she grabbed the cuffs of the inner dress with the light film composition just like Tohka's AstralDress, she let out a voice that would sound like it would disappear.

"……I.……hate, painful things. I also hate……scary things. Surely, those people too……whether its pain, or scary things, I think they……don't want it too. That's why, I……"

It was such a small and faint voice, Shidou could have easily missed what the she was trying to say.

But because of that—from those words Shidou, felt a piercing like wave to his heart.

"……Yoshino……you, just for a reason like that—"

But, Shidou did not finish the end of his sentence.

While Yoshino's whole body was trembling, she continued talking.

"But……it's because, I… …am, weak… …and a coward. If I am alone… …I am useless. I am… …scared of being hurt, when I can't, do anything… …the inside of my head… …will go crazy…, that's why, I might… …do bad things to everyone…"

Halfway through, it became a teary voice.

After sucking in her snot, she continued on.

"Thats why… …Yoshinon… …is my, hero… …when Yoshinon is… …with me, even, if I get scared… …he would say… …it's okay. And, then… …it will really turn out okay. That's why… …that's why."

"……Kuh."

Shidou unintentionally bit his lips. He was gripping both his hands so hard, that blood might spurt out.

If he did not do that—he could not bear it anymore.

Yoshino. This small girl was. Too kind—and too sad.

Whether it was [pain] or [scary] things it was certain that she did not like it.

Thinking of the enemy, that had targeted her countless times with hostility, bad intentions and killing intent, and yet—still she decided not to hurt them. She chose to do that? Such a difficult thing?

Yoshino is—weak?

Yoshino's head was shaking from her own evaluation—there is no way, she is weak.

Aah, but, that is—cruel, and awfully cruel sense of mercy.

"____"

Without thinking Shidou stood up from his seat.

And then circled around the table and knelt down beside Yoshino—and just like that, he gently caressed Yoshino's head.

"……,e…,err"

"I will."

"——,……?"

"I will—save you."

He said that and, Yoshino stared in wonder. Without caring about it, Shidou continued.



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"I will definitely, find Yoshinon. And……hand it over to you. That is not all. I will make Yoshinon no longer need to protect you. You no longer need to go through those [painful] or [scary] things. I won't let them near you. I will—become, your hero."

While patting her head through the hood, he said that sentence that was totally out of character.

But—he did not stop there.

Because, in Yoshino's kindness, there was something important lacking.

It was only one problem which was: even if she has the mercy of a saint, that mercy would not be shown in return to her.

If that's the reason, then there was no choice but to have it be given from the outside.

No more, about what would happen to the Spirit or what not, it was no longer relevant to him.

To Yoshino. To this overly kind little girl, to have nothing save her, that kind of thing, he could not forgive it.

Yes—that was what he thought.

"……? ……?"

During that time, Yoshino's eyes were turning black and white but, after 10 seconds passed, she opened her lips.

"……Th…ank you……very m…uch."

"……Ou."

He was a little happy when Yoshino honestly said such a thing. He made a small nod.

But, during the occasion Yoshino was letting out her voice, he accidently turned his eyes to those cute lips……feeling uncomfortable Shidou averted his sights away.

"……? Shidou… …-san…?"

Yoshino was tilting her head while looking at Shidou.

"No, err, about that……It's about before. I'm sorry."

"Eh……?"

"No……how'd you put it……I kissed, you."

To put it in accurate terms it was not in Shidou's personality to bring up this kind of talk but……it might be an important matter to a girl. He put the meaning in the apology and said it.

But Yoshino was in a blank state and was staring in wonder; once again she tilted her head.

It was like; she did not understand what Shidou had just said.

"……What is, a kiss?"

"Eh? Aah, that is……lips touching together, like this…"

Even though Shidou explained to her, Yoshino made a face as if she did not understand at all, and then thrust her face up directly at Shidou's face.

"Is……it, like……this?"

"……Uh!"

It was a distance that, if he were to bring his face a little closer, their lips would touch.

His heart was about to fly out in this dangerous situation but, Shidou remembered his living together training with Tohka, and somehow succeeded in pretending to have a calm face.

"Uh, ah, aah……yes, it feels like that."

But Yoshino made a small groan, and again she said in a soft voice.

"……I, don't remember……clearly."

"……Eh?"

Hearing that reply, Shidou frowned.

But—at that instant.

"shidou…! I'm sorry, I was—"

Suddenly the door opened and Tohka who left the house early in the morning, while she was breathing hard on her shoulders, entered the living room.

And then, she saw Shidou and Yoshino's figure facing each other and would be kissing any at moment, *piki*, and her body stiffened up.

"Eh……?"

Right after, Shidou made an absentminded face.

"To—Too, To-To-To-To-To-To-To-To-To-To-Tohka……!"

On his face, sweat gushed out.

"……Hi……"

Yoshino probably felt something strange; she turned backwards, and leaked a soft voice.

But it might be something that cannot be helped. To Yoshino, Tohka should be the scary opponent that took her puppet away from her—and on top of that, Tohka who was quietly lingering around the living room entrance, a difficult to explain pressure was leaking out from her.

Incidentally from just now, a loud noise was coming out from the buzzer on his right ear indicating it is an emergency situation.

"……"

While being silent, Tohka made an awfully gentle smile, and just like that she slowly entered the living room.

-*Twitch*, such a feeling was transmitted to her hands. It would also seem that Yoshino's body was trembling.

"To-Tohka, this is……"

It was like his mental state turned into that of a man who got caught having an affair at the scene of the crime, Shidou hastily moved his hands.

But Tohka passed through the both of them, leaving the living room and headed straight into the kitchen, she then took out all the food and drinks from the refrigerator and shelves, and just like that she exited to the corridor.

From the door, *dadadadada* such footsteps could be heard—and the moment he thought it reached the second floor, this time *BAM*, the sound of the door being slammed could be heard.

……Looks like, she plans on shutting herself inside again.

And what's more, this time it's a siege with a sufficient supply of food in stock.

"Er,errr……"

"……It turned into something annoying."

From his right ear, he heard a voice mixed with a sigh.

"Wh-What should I do now……?"

"For the time being, you can only leave her alone for now. Even if Shidou were to try and talk to her now, it'll only cause a reverse effect anyway."

"I-Is that so……"

He said that, and takes a glimpse at Yoshino that was sitting beside him.

But, wondering when it happened, Yoshino's figure that was supposed to be on top of the sofa suddenly disappeared.

"Are……? Yoshino?"

"——It looks like, she got [Lost] to the other world when Tohka's was approaching her. Having her puppet being taken away, must have been quite a traumatic experience to her."

"…I see."

Fuu, he exhaled a good breathe—and frowned because of a bad feeling.

It would seem that Yoshino remembered Tohka taking her puppet away.

Despite that……she said she could not remember the kiss with Shidou.

No, even yesterday she was definitely also in a state that she doesn't mind it; it might be perhaps that she holds no special emotion towards the act of kissing. Spirits have different knowledge and sense of values depending on what the matter is, there might be a possibility that it is like that.

But—in Yoshino's reaction there was, a little sense of discomfort.

Shidou touched his mouth, while moving his lips.

"Hey, Kotori……there is something that I am worried about. Can you investigate it for me?"

"What?"

Shidou, told her the questions that was floating in his mind.

"Fuun……I understand, I will send Reine to investigate it when she gets back."

"Ou, I'm counting on you."

And, when Shidou said that, Kotori continued on as if she remembered something.

"……Aah, yes yes, although I missed the chance to say this because of Shidou's interruption but we have some good news."

"Ah?"

"From the investigation we got from the images, we have confirmed the whereabouts of the puppet."

"Really?! Where is it now?"

"That is—"

When Kotori told him the location, Shidou’s cheeks twitched.

"U……ugah!"

In the room in the deepest part of the second floor where Tohka rushed in, while eating the food that was within arm’s reach that she brought in moments ago, she raised those shouts. Well from others perspective, it was a stressful way of eating.

"What is this……What is this MOU……! Gu, muguuuu……!"

When Tohka was absent from home, Shidou invited the little girl from a few days ago in.

As an event that was the only thing that happened, there was no factor for making Tohka angry at all.

Shidou is Tohka's good friend. And that friend brought a new friend back.

It was no mistake that Tohka's correct method of interaction was supposed to be reconciling with Shidou and apologize for what happened a few days ago, after that [Welcome, and sorry about what happened before], while saying that and taking the little girl's hands.

But—she could not do it.

The moment she saw Shidou and the girl alone in the room, the so called [bad feeling] rushed through her whole body, and it became impossible for her to be in that area.

"Uuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu……!"

Tohka devastated through the food one by one, and squatted down on the spot.

"……shidou—"

—I want to apologize, to shidou. I want to reconcile— with shidou.

Those feelings were not a lie.

But……because the [bad feeling] was swirling inside her chest, she could not do it.

While being in the posture of sitting on the floor while grasping her knees, Tohka moaned in pain.

Chapter 4 - Multiple requests at Tobiichi's House

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Part 1

"We are meeting…here right?"

Shidou was holding a paper bag filled with pastries in his left hand, while in the right a map drawn on some memo paper. Right after making a gloomy sigh, he looked up at the high-rise apartment.

To calm down his nervousness he patted his chest, [This is work, it's inevitable] and took a deep breath.

…But, nevertheless.

"Why is it that I have to do something like a robber…?"

"There is not much of a choice. Shidou is the only person that can get invited into the Tobiichi's residence."

When Shidou complained, from the intercam equipped on his right ear, he heard Kotori's voice.

Yes—right now Shidou has arrived at Origami Tobiichi's house which is an apartment.

From the carefully investigated images taken at that time, when Yoshino went Lost —we found out that when Origami was returning to base, she picked up the puppet and brought it back with her.

The only way to reclaim it was to: "Hey Tobiichi, is it okay if I come over to your house to play?"

He asked her this a few days ago and thus he was invited to her house.

"…Speaking of which, from the beginning is there even a need for me to be invited here? If it's something like retrieving one puppet, it should be easy for [Ratatoskr] to—"

"…We tried, specially."

"Eh?"

From the sigh mixed words, Shidou tilted his head.

"I'm saying that even though we tried infiltrating 3 times a few days ago, all of it was a failure—In the room there were infra-red lasers set up, tear gas that sprays out, even sentry guns were installed in important parts of the room……6 members of our mechanics division got sent to the hospital. Seriously, what on earth is that girl fighting with?"

"Ha-Haa…"

"There is the possibility of retrieving it by forcefully entering and using brute force but—if we have the privilege of getting an invitation..Then isn't that a better choice?"

"…I understand."

To Shidou who is a normal timid person, it was a really reluctant kind of work to do but… When he saw the uneasiness on Yoshino, he could no longer say anything.

And what's more—to Shidou himself, there was something that he wanted to discuss with Origami.

And, there was one more thing that was bothering Shidou—Shidou asked Kotori a question.

"Speaking of which…How is Tohka doing?"

"It's the same as usual. She is locked up in her room."

"…I see."

Shidou scratched his cheek troubled.

A few days ago, right after she saw Yoshino invited to his house, Tohka's condition still remained strange.

No, it does not mean that she had continued locking herself up in her room like last time; she goes to school properly but somehow he felt like she was avoiding him for some reason.

And after he asked the question, he pulled himself together.

That was a problem that could cause a stomach ache but this is more important right now.

"—Okay."

Shidou resolved himself, and facing the apartment door he stepped forward.

The automatic door opened, and to the machine installed near the entrance, he typed in Origami's house number.

When he did that, he immediately heard Origami's voice.

"Identify."

"A-Ah…it's me, Itsuka Shidou."

"Enter."

As soon as she said that, the automatic door of the inside entrance opened.

Shidou, while remaining hesitant entered the apartment, and rode the elevator 6 floors up, just like that he reached the designated room number.

"…Well then, according to the plan."

"Okay, leave it to me."

He said that, and Kotori replied back with those words.

Right now, flying around near Shidou was [Ratatoskr]'s controlled super small-sized camera that was the size of a bug.

The plan was—while Shidou was getting Origami's attention, the camera would go around performing the search.

"…Fuu."

And after taking a deep breath once more, he rang the doorbell.

When he did that, immediately—as if Origami was waiting in front of the door, the door opened.

"H-Hey Tobiichi. Sorry about making such a unreasonable request—"

Shidou lightly raised his hand to give a greeting—and froze. *splat* He dropped the bag filled with pastries that he carried in his left hand. The silence that followed was as if the staff was now unable to enjoy a delicious cake which he has planned earlier.

The reason was simple—Origami's attire was...

It's true that this was Tobiichi's house. It is her freedom to wear what she wants. It was not something that Shidou should be complaining about.

But that was just—beyond expectations.

A dark blue one piece with a frilled apron attached to it. And on her head a cute head dress.

Yes, right now she was from head to toe, in complete maid style costume.

The number 1 genius of his high school, of all things. That permafrost, Miss Tobiichi Cocytus Origami.

"E-Errr……T.o.b.i.i.c.h.i.-s.a.n…?"

"Yes?"

Gems of sweat were forming on Shidou's face while he let out his voice, but Origami just tilted her head a little. Her expression as always, was expressionless like a doll.

That was the state that Origami was in.

Truthfully speaking "I am Origami's twin sister, the cosplay loving Irogami-chan!" In such a scenario, Shidou entrusted his hope to this fleeting scenario but his hope was completely smashed.

"N-No…what kind of attire is that...you?"

Origami, lowered her eyes down onto her own attire curiously and after that, tilted her head once again.

"You don't like it?"

"No……It's not about that……"

Instead of hating it, it's more like he wants more of it but it would be embarrassing

to put that into words.

……Somehow, he couldn't look straight anymore. While Shidou's face was red, his eyes wandered around trying to avoid looking at her.

"Enter."

Without showing any sign of caring, Origami invited Shidou inside the room.

"So-Sorry to bother you…"

Shidou picked up the paper bag that fell on the floor, and closed the door with his slightly trembling fingers grabbing onto the knob.

"……?"

And, Shidou frowned. Suddenly from the intercam, static-noise echoed.

As if to ask Kotori what was wrong, he poked the intercam. When he did that, he heard a little of Kotori's voice mixed in with the static.

"Ku……uh, Don't tell me———jamming——Shi—, Can't——conne——, somehow——"

He heard it until there and then, *snap*, that sound interrupted, and he no longer could hear anything from it.

"……!? O-Oi…"

"What's wrong?"

When he was asking the intercam, Origami who was in front of him turned back.

"Ah…N-No…It's nothing."

"I see."

Origami turned back to the direction that she was facing, and he made a big sigh.

He does not know the reason but it seems that transmissions aren't getting through here. If that is the case, then the camera might also be out of service too.

No…even if by chance the camera was still functional. The situation was still the

same since they couldn't send any information back to Shidou.

The point is—right now he has no choice but to successfully clear this mission all on his own.

"…Oi oi, are you serious?"

After Shidou grumbled in a volume that Origami couldn't hear, he scratched his forelocks.

But even if he was to state his displeasure, nothing would change. To confirm his determination Shidou swallowed down his saliva and chased after Origami.

And then, Origami pressed on, and entered the living room.

"…Un? This smell is…"

And, the moment he entered the living room, he smelled a floating sweet aroma.

Although, it does not feel like it is the smell of food. To put it another way, this is—

"Tobiichi? Are you using incense?"

"Yes."

"He, heee……"

How do you put it, it was a little unexpected. It might be a self-created image but, Tobiichi Origami didn't seem to be the type to be interested in these sorts of things or pleasures.

He felt he saw a side of her that she hadn't shown to her other classmates before, it was a little embarrassing.

…But, wondering why.

This aroma, when he sniffed some of it, his head went a little blank, it was like if you were to lose focus, your whole consciousness would be blown away……well, it was a product that was highly effective for creating a relaxing mood.

"Have a seat."

"Ah, aah…"

After being told that, he sat down in front of the coffee table that was placed in the middle of the living room.

"……"

And then, after seeing Shidou sit down, Origami also lowered her hips to settle down.

Right beside Shidou.

"Eh…?"

Normally, he thought that she was supposed to sit opposite of him but in the Tobiichi house this might be a normal thing.

Seeing Origami's refreshing face, he started wondering if his common sense was correct or wrong, Shidou started being a little uncertain of it.

"Err…"

"……"

"About that…"

"……"

After a few moment. Shidou nodded in agreement.

—Yes, I see. As expected, to the Tobiichi family this position is the standard one. There was no sweat flowing down his cheeks. That is because this is a normal thing to do.

But as expected it immediately started to get awkward, feeling that he should be the one to start a conversation, Shidou opened his lips.

"To-Tobiichi?"

"Yes?"

"No, it's just a simple question……Tobiichi, you are living here alone?"

Origami, made a small consent.

"…I-I see."

It might be……was as he had thought but when it was made clear that, the fact that he was intruding into a girl's house, one in which lives alone, his heart beat started to get violent.

"Wh-When did you start living alone?"

When Shidou asked her, as if complementing she continued adding on.

"Right after my parents died 5 years ago, I lived with my grandmother for a while but around the time I entered high school, I transferred here alone."

"Living alone starting from high school huh……isn't it a problem?"

"That does not seem to be the case."

She said that with minimum use of her facial muscles, and was continuously staring at Shidou's face. And as you know, the distance was very close.

…It was somehow, although they were only having a conversation but there was a strange atmosphere developing.

Shidou tried to hide his embarrassment from her; he scratched the back of his head exaggeratedly.

"No, haha,ha…but as I thought I really do think you are amazing. Sooner or later I will probably start living alone too but somehow, if I'm alone whether it's food or cleaning it'll be a problem."

"No problem."

"Eh?"

To the Origami who plainly declared that, he turned his face to her in wonder.

"I will do it."

Shidou's body froze up in an instant.

"Uh…!? Errr…that means…"

However, faster than Shidou talking, Origami stood up from her spot.

"Eh?..."

"Wait here."

And just like that even without the sound of footsteps, she walked into the kitchen.

It would seem that she went to the kitchen to get the tea ready.

Shidou was blankly staring at Origami's back who was standing in the kitchen…… and immediately swung his neck sideways.

"…Oh yeah, the puppet is…"

He made a soft mutter, and sent his sights around the room's interior.

The completed set of light-colored simple furniture was beautifully arranged inside the room.

Instead of it being girly-like, he could not feel the presence of this room being used in daily life. It was like the interior design of a model house.

"…Un."

From the quick survey, he could not see any puppet like objects.

Objects itself are limited here but the house structure space was large, it was going to be a problem finding it.

And what's more, it was a problem on how to deceive Origami's eyes. As expected, it would be necessary to start searching properly when Origami takes the tray away. No, it should be the opposite; Shidou would pretend to take the tray away and then—

And like that, Origami returned carrying a tray that had a pair of saucers and teacups with sugar and milk.

While being silent, she arranged all of it on the table.

"By all means."

Saying that, while approaching Shidou and once again she lowered her hips to settle down beside him……he wondered why, compared to just now the distance was much closer this time.

"Ah-Aah. Thank you."

The smell was different from the incense, a faint scent of Origami's shampoo drifted into his nasal cavity.

After wiping off the sweat that was naturally spewing out using his sleeves, he extended his hands to the teacup.

"……!?"

But, just before he touched the cup, he frowned his eyebrows instinctively.

The contents of teacups between Origami and Shidou, were clearly different.

From looking at Origami's tea, it was clear, transparent and reddish brown.

And the other one which belonged to Shidou, he could not understand what was at the bottom of the cup until he faltered; it was a mud like liquid.

He thought it was coffee for an instant but…it was wrong.

To try and identify what this liquid was, he lowered his face towards it, the moment he got close, a strong irritating smell equivalent to that of biological weapons or nuclear waste, performed a raid inside Shidou's nasal cavity.

"——Enfrt!?"

Instinctively, his body bent backwards like a bow.

"What's wrong?"

"Wh-What's wrong…what on earth is this!?"

"Tea, from overseas."

"Tha-That's quite a special country…"

Shidou frowned while pinching his nose and peeked at the cup again. Shidou's animal instinct was stubbornly telling him to refuse drinking it— It might be that, if he were to drink this he would be recognized as an adult, it might be that kind of thing.

"Ah…Tobiichi? I feel bad for having you prepare something so precious. I, might

be weak against this—"

But, with Shidou restraining himself, Origami advanced the teacup further towards Shidou.

"No……Tobiichi?"

"By all means."

"No, It's not by all means…"

"By all means."

"Err, about this"

"By all means."

"……Itadakimasu."[2D 1]

Somehow, he felt like he hated his own character. In the end without turning it down, Shidou faced towards the cup again.

"……"

But, as expected if he were to just drink like this it would feel awkward.

Even if it was a just little, Shidou wanted to make the taste milder. He took the milk that was placed on the table with his other hand, and poured it into the cup filled with that liquid.

…Speaking of the result, it did not dissolve into it.

It was completely separated and the milk was floating on the tea's surface—it was like an ocean that has heavy oil poured onto it. On the contrary, he felt that the current situation was getting worse.

"…Eei, I don't care anymore!"

When Shidou made up his mind, he held up the cup, and let the liquid flow into the depths of his throat.

"——Obufuuu…!?"

He did not lose to the odor but the stimulating taste was violating Shidou's taste buds.

There might be a chance that he will never put this into his mouth but he felt that if he were to drink hydrochloric acid the taste might be the same, it was that kind of taste he was feeling now. It was not bitter or spicy, it just hurt.

"Wa……, Water…!"

But, there was no water in his arms reach.

"……!"

Shidou immediately, breaking the packaging of the box of cakes he had brought over, and then shoved in the broken human shaped cookies from [Tenguu excellent cakes], into his mouth.

A gentle sweetness was spreading through inside his mouth. …Shidou lost all his energy and fell on his back, and finally took a breath.

"Haa…, haa…"

And—

"…Ah?"

Shidou pressed his chest.

For some reason, his body was strangely hot; it felt like his body was burning. …He was wondering if today's temperature was high.

In addition to that.

"……"

For some reason Origami, placed her hands beside Shidou's face which was now facing upwards because of him falling over. Her body sat over his stomach area—she had taken a mount position.

"……!? Tobiichi!?"

"Yes?"

It was as if Shidou was the one who was saying weird things, she replied back in a cool and calm manner.

"N-No, what are you…"

"I can't?"

"I-I think you…can't."

While Shidou was restraining his head from almost being embraced, he somehow made those words.

Whether it was Origami's moderate weight, the smell that only girls have, the soft touch, or the rustling of the maid clothing, this was bad even if you didn't mix all of that together. If he were to relax even a bit, it felt like she would activate a Trap Card on him. [2D 2]

"I see."

When Origami said that, she blinked her eyes.

"Then, make a trade."

"Huh...?"

"In return for me stepping aside, I have only one request. I want you to swallow it unconditionally."

"Wha-What is it…?"

Right after he swallowed his saliva down, he asked.

When he did that Origami, after unusually taking some time hesitating, she let out a soft voice.

"You, call Yatogami Tohka with Tohka."

"Heh…? Aah…ye-yeah you're right."

Shidou made a small nod. It was certainly true.

No, because the name [Tohka] was originally given to her by Shidou, it was a normal thing to do. The talk of forging a surname in the family register for her was

Reine's doing.

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"But you call me, by using Tobiichi."

"Ah,aah……"

"This is quite unfair."

With that said, *pui* Origami turned her face away.

"Eh……? No, err…"

Shidou weighed Origami's intention but question marks were floating in his head.

"So this means…? Should I call Tohka with Yatogami from now on? Somehow I can't get used to that…"

"……"

Origami without saying anything, tightened the mount, increasing the weight on his stomach.

It was around the weight of a normal girl. It was not that heavy.

But still, the question was not about that. Because of the feeling of steam almost erupting out of his ears, Shidou attacked.

"Then…Then what are you telling me to do…!?"

When Origami relaxed the mount back to normal, while turning her face away a little, she let out her words.

"I want you, to call me Origami."

"Err……"

"You can't?"

Origami said that to him.

Although it was the usual vocal sound without any accent but—just a little, he felt that she was holding in an insecure echo in her voice.

"No…it is not that I can't……I think."

"I see."

"……"

"……"

And again for a while, silence was flowing by.

This was expected, even Shidou understood that. …After clearing his throat with a cough, he shook his throat.

"Errrr……O-Origami."

"……"

When Shidou called her that, Origami raised her hips from Shidou's stomach without saying anything, and then stood up on the spot.

And then while being expressionless, *hop*, she hopped.

"Heh…?"

Because of the surreal scenery, Shidou who had also gotten up, stared at her in wonder.

But Origami was not in the attitude to be caring about that; she opened her lips a little.

"—Shidou."

"……!"

Speaking of which, this might be the first time Origami called him that. …It felt like usually it would be [Itsuka Shidou], he would be called in his full name.

"O,Ou."

Somehow he felt something itching him while replying back to her, and after that Origami *hop* hopped once again, and of course her facial muscles did not move an inch.

……It might be that, she was in delight.

After being immersed in the aftertaste, a few seconds passed and Origami cast her eyes down and she took a deep breath.

And then—

"Please wait."

For some reason she suddenly said that, and turned back.

"O-Oi, Tobi—"

"……"

"…Origami, where are you going?"

"Shower."

Origami, turned to Shidou and made a small glimpse, and said only that word before leaving the living room.

"Huh…?"

Shidou who was left alone in the living room, after being dumbfounded for a while, he finally understood the situation, [hafuu] and he took a deep breath. Just like that, he once again fell on his back.

"Ah—"

He placed his hands on his chest.

His heart was beating at an unbelievable rate.

But, he can't keep on doing that. Right after a few seconds, he immediately woke his body up.

"Oh yea……! Isn't this a good chance to find the puppet?"

Because of the continuous amount of stimulating experiences he had, he had almost forgotten about today's goal, to find the puppet.

This was the anticipated opening—a once in a life time chance.

"But why did she……suddenly have to take a shower?"

He twisted his neck, did she get sweaty or something?

……But really isn't she a little bit too defenseless? If Shidou had more courage, there might be a chance that he might go and peek in the bathroom. The behavior just now was also the same but, he felt that Origami did not pay much attention to these sorts of things.

"……Well, it does not change the fact that I got saved."

Shidou stood up straight and he began to carefully examine the living room much more thoroughly compared to the earlier quick survey.

"The places in plain sight where it could be easily seen……nope."

He mumbled, and while hiding his footsteps, he also checked the middle of the shelves.

In reality, it might be more effective if he searched for it by scattering all of the objects from the inside, like a burglar's household search, but……obviously he can't do such a thing here.

The absolute objective this time was to recover Yoshino's puppet, but it was also to not let Origami sense what he was up to as much as possible.

"…Somehow, it is hard to investigate since I have to rearrange everything back to how it was…"

Because all of the insides of the drawer's space had been meticulously arranged, if the arrangement was off even a little she would discover it immediately.

But, if he were to always take that into consideration nothing could be accomplished. While rearranging it back to its normal place as best he could, he continued with his search.

"Looks like it's not inside the living room…which means…"

Shidou brought his eyes to the kitchen which was separated by the dining table.

He thought that the probability of it being there was low but the chances of the puppet being used as an oven glove wasn't zero. It might be a good idea to have a quick look just in case.

"Let's see…?"

When he arrived in the kitchen, he searched systematically starting from the cupboard to under the sink, he checked it all.

"Un…this is?"

And, Shidou's eyebrows twitched.

In the rubbish bin located at the deepest part of the kitchen, he spotted several small empty bottles in it.

"What the heck is this…?"

He tilted his head, and used his hands to pick them up.

"Certain-kill Red viper."

"Large unequaled black nose-goblin."

"Soft shell turtle gourd 1000."

"The Great Mana."

Etc, etc, etc…

It was a lineup of useless high grade energy drinks, that costs don't know how many thousand yen.

No matter how you would look at it, these aren't the type of goods that a high school girl should be taking as a nutrition substitutes.

Shidou scratched his cheek.

…Well, most probably it is something impossible but, he was thinking that, if this was all poured inside a pot and boiled, it might produce a liquid with an extremely strong taste.

Incidentally, if it was given to a man to drink, not only would his whole body turn shining gold and immediately turn into hyper mode, a certain part of his lower area would probably turn red from the heat produced.

"We-Well, it is a violation of privacy to pry into other peoples tastes."

Well, conducting a house-search inside a girls house itself, was a very high ranking intrusion of privacy, so Shidou does not sound convincing at all even if he were to say anything.

"As expected, it is not in the kitchen. So the next place would be—"

Shidou returned the medicine drink bottles back into the rubbish bin, and started walking, while he was focusing his attention at the living room entrance.

He was certain that in the corridor, where he entered the house but just before the living room was a door; the only door to the left.

It had now been over 15 minutes since Origami had gone to the shower room. Feeling a need to increase his pace, Shidou hurried to the corridor.

And walked to the last door without stopping—

"…Uh."

Reaching halfway, he stopped his legs.

Just right in front of the last door, there was a door connected to the bathroom door, and he heard the sound of water dropping from the shower coming from there.

His heart beat that had dropped a little, suddenly spiked again.

"…Calm down, calm down."

For the time being he wrote the word [human] on his palm three times and swallowed it, he tried imagining Origami having a potato head, and he also tried counting prime numbers to calm himself down.

……Honestly speaking, he was really not that calm.

For some reason today, the Berserker inside of Shidou's head was running wild. Seriously what was the reason? It was like the stimulation of having drunk many types of high vigor medicines.

If he were to continue and stay here, there might be a chance that he might do something crazy.

Shidou impatiently placed his hands on the last door and flung the door open.

"……This is the…bedroom."

In the space of six tatami mats, the bed and clothes closets were arranged.

"……Unn?"

And, immediately after entering the room, Shidou made a doubtful voice as he narrowed his eyes.

…Somehow, he felt that there was something out of place.

The room is small…? No, this is—

"…That girl sleeps in quite a huge bed."

Yes. For some reason the bed was double sized. Thanks to that, the room looks strangely small.

And mysteriously, compared to the other furniture this bed was oddly new. New as in, it seemed that it was a product that had only been removed from its packaging only in the last few days.

"Did she buy a new one recently…? No, but still…"

While saying that he moved to the bed's pillow side—and then twist his head again.

It could be compared to a hotel's bed maker, on top of the tightly beautiful sheets, there were two pillows arranged side by side.

And what's more, on the pillow cover a message [No problem], was embroidered on it.

"……"

He flipped it to the back.

On the back [I don't mind] was written there.

There was no room for option.

"……"

After a silence that was longer than before.

"We-Well then……where is the puppet…"

Since he didn't understand it no matter how much he thought about it—eventually Shidou, stopped thinking about it.

And—over there.

"Ah."

Shidou that has his face looking up let out a small sound.

On top of the tall wardrobe located at the side of the room, a slightly recognizable silhouette was being enshrined there.

A rabbit shaped puppet that had been given a comical design—without a mistake, that belongs to Yoshino.

"So you are in such a place huh…"

Like this, he was able to save Yoshino now. In Shidou's side, he took a breather.

But, the moment Shidou took a step towards the wardrobe's direction, at that time.

"……"

From outside the bedroom, *kachin*, he heard such a sound.

It was not the sound of a normal door. That is most likely, the sound of the shower room being opened.

It would seem, that Origami finished her showering.

"This is bad……"

Shidou quickly grabbed the puppet on top the wardrobe, and forcibly stuffed it into his pocket; he then killed the sound of his footsteps and returned back to the living room.

It was in hair's breadth. He made it just in time. Shidou took a small unwinding breath.

The only thing left after this was to hold onto this, and safely retreat.

…The degree of difficulty on the last thing left to do… …he felt that it would be high if he does it, and hoped that it was only his imagination.

"Ah……Oh yeah."

Suddenly, he let out his voice which sounded like an internal monologue.

The most important goal for visiting the Tobiichi house, he managed to achieve it.

But Shidou, has one more private objective for himself.

It has been Origami pace when he was invited into the house, and he was not able to pull the strings of the conversation but……there might be no other chance than this.

Once more—he wanted to try having a talk with Origami.

Regarding the Spirits.

And, like that, and as if to suspend Shidou's thinking, he opened the living room door. It would seem that Origami returned.

Shidou *gulp* drank his saliva, while letting out his voice he was faced towards her direction.

"H-Hey Origami. There is something I want to ask you about—"

But.

"I……Uh!?"

Shidou placed his eyes on Origami, and stopped at her body.

The state of Origami that was inside the living room was, not the maid outfit from just now—She was now naked and was covered with a bath towel.

What's more, since she has just bathed in water, the towel was gracefully clinging to her, because of that her body line rose up to the surface. A very alluring beauty was in the air.

"Wha, whawhawha……"

No matter how much this is her own house, it was visiting time, and in the time

while having a male which is in the same generation as her in her house, as one would expect, her appearance is too abnormal.

"What?"

But when Origami said it like it was extremely normal, she tilted her head a little as if wondering why Shidou froze up.

"……Ah, aah, did you forget your change of clothes? Ah, hahahaha……you're quite clumsy huh."

When Shidou made a dry laugh, like a machine that has not been oiled, he faced towards the direction of the day after tomorrow.

"……"

What's more, while being silent Origami approached Shidou without making any sound of footsteps—like the same as just now, she folded her knees to the part he is breathing, and he then felt a warm temperature there on that area.

"—!?"

Shidou got shocked and twitched his shoulders; he then took some distance away from Origami by jumping.

"……?"

Origami tilted her head in wonder.

"What's wrong?"

"Wha…, what's wrong…"

While she was saying that, Origami steadily filled in the gap in distance.

Shidou desperately enclosed himself with thoughts—and immediately released his voice.

"O-Origami! Err— th,there is something that I wanted to ask you!"

Origami, stopped in her tracks.

"What?"

"Ah……aah, err……"

To confirm something, Shidou poked the intercam.

There was—no sound, could be heard. The communication was, completely being cut off.

If it is now, no matter what he says, it would not be transmitted to Kotori and the others.

After strengthening his resolve, Shidou opened his mouth.

"Err……Origami. You— hate, the Spirits……right?"

"……"

The moment Shidou said those words; he felt that Origami's mood changed.

She tilted her head a little, as if she doubted Shidou for bringing up that topic.

"Why?"

Origami looked directly at Shidou's eyes and asked.

This was only natural. Since honestly speaking, it did not make sense. If he was not able to communicate with <Fraxinus> then, she would definitely avoid leaking any unwanted information; she was probably scolded that she has been stirring up unwanted suspicions.

But Shidou, could not bear to not ask any longer.

To Origami. Because of the Spirits she lost her parents—and was now, bearing her fangs at the Spirits.

"……No, err— about that. E-Even among the Spirits, there are good people……such a thing."

"Impossible."

Without even thinking, it was immediately cut down.

"Even by just appearing the Spirit would break the world. Just by [Being here] they destroy the world. That is evil. That is a disaster. They are the enemy of all living

things."

"Th……That kind of way saying that is—"

"—I, will never forget."

Shidou's sentence was interrupted midway.

Her expression, and her voice tone, has not changed even one bit but.……he wondered why, he felt a cold intimidating air from her.

"5 years ago, the Spirit that took away my parents."

"5 years…….ago?"

When Shidou made a dumbfounded voice, Origami made a small nod and continued.

"5 years ago,a large-scaled fire occurred at the Tenguu City Nankou town."

"Eh…?"

Shidou raised his eyebrows. Shidou used to live there too before.

Because of the fire his house got burned down, and the current house now is from after he moved.

"The matter was officially covered up but...that fire was—started by a Spirit."

"Wha……?"

Shidou opened his eyes wide in shock.

"It was a Spirit that has pure red blazing flames covering her. I— lost everything to that Spirit. I definitely will not forgive her. I will not let any more people feel the same way as I did before."

Although it was soft but, she said it in a voice that made him think it was filled with firm determination, Origami clenched her fist tightly.

"And, of course—Yatogami Tohka is not an exception."

"Eh…?"

Because of Tohka's name suddenly appeared in the conversation, Shidou stared into wonder.

"Right now she is...not confirmed as a Spirit. But, I cannot pardon her existence."

"……Bu-But, if the Tohka now does not cause any spacequakes, she won't go on a rampage. If that happens then—she is no different than a normal girl right?"

But, without showing a single speck of hesitation or indecision Origami swung her head sideways.

"It is true that her Spirit readings have vanished. But, because the reason is still unclear, it is normal to be ready for the worst case scenario."

"……Tha-That is—"

Shidou became hesitant.

The point that Origami said was right. That's because, she does not know that Tohka's powers had been sealed by Shidou's ability.

"But……even if the spacequakes do occur, it isn't their will to make it happen right!? Despite that—"

"—?"

When Shidou said it like that, Origami tilted her head in curiosity.

"How...do you know that?"

"……Uh, no, that is—"

He said too much. Shidou was finding some evasive answers while his sights were swimming around.

But, Origami continued on using a monotonous voice.

"Since this is a good chance, there is also something that I wanted to ask you."

"Wha-What is it……?"

"On the 21th of April. I saw you when I was in the middle of an operation."

"……Uh."

When she said that date, Shidou's back froze.

That date was—the day when Tohka came over to this world silently.

This means—it was on that, day that Tohka got her powers sealed by the kiss from Shidou.

"What kind of person are you?"

While she was staring at Shidou with peaceful eyes, Origami said that.

"No, errr, about that…"

He can't leak information about [Ratatoskr]. Shidou became flustered—

"……"

But, he bit his lower lips and breathed to calm himself down.

"…Tobiichi. You might not believe this but—even if it's a little, could you listen to what I have to say?"

Without a speck of hesitation, Origami lowered her head forward.

"Un……err, that. Although I can't say it specifically……in reality, I have met with Spirits plenty of times, and I have talked to them— Not only Tohka……Yoshino too."

"Yoshino?"

"Aah— it's the Spirit that you call the [Hermit]."

Although Origami's expression did not move at all, the moment Shidou said that, *breathe*, it felt that her usual breathing got a little faster.

"That is very dangerous. You should stop it."

With a voice that has no accent, she warned him.

But Shidou swung his head sideways.

"—Tobiichi. You, have you even once tried talking to Yoshino……? No—probably not. Since you don't even know her name."

He turned his whole body towards Origami, and continued.

"I beg you. Even if it's little, even if it is a little it's okay. If Yoshino appears from the other world this time, try talking to her— Just like what you said, there might be evil Spirits out there. But, Tohka and Yoshino— I don't know how am I going to put this into words but…they are really...good people…! Those girls are really kind, they are so kind that it is rare to find them even in human society……!"

"……"

Without saying anything, Origami was staring at Shidou in a very calm state.

It was quiet. But he could not feel that cold and mysterious air anymore; it was a mysterious gaze instead.

"……"

—Ah, I see. Shidou finally realized it.

He knew that Origami had no authority to make left and right decisions for the AST.

But even so, the reason for him to specially take on the risk of leakage of information just so that he can talk to Origami about this matter—it is because he just had to do it.

Of course, the biggest reason was to save Yoshino, but that was not the only reason he had.

That was, he felt that he finally understood it by experiencing it directly.

"I—see, I……"

Once again, Shidou faced his eyes towards Origami.

"I……I think I want to do something about Yoshino— I want to save her, I also want you to accept Tohka too. However, on the same level as those wishes. I don't want you, Tobiichi—yes, I don't want you to kill all those...good people…!"

"……"

"I know that, you are also a good person too……! Although you are still in high school, but you are fighting to protect the world! It is not something anyone can do. I respect you for that."

Yes. Shidou does not have the right to say that Origami was wrong.

She lost her parents to the Spirits 5 years ago—and she did not want other victims to be like her anymore, she was a noble girl that took up weapons to protect others.

At that determination, there was no way Shidou's cheap words could stain it.

But—

"How……how did things turn out to be this way…… There is no one—there is no one that is bad at all. Tohka, Yoshino, and Tobiichi, even you too, you are all good people yet."

"That is—"

Beginning to speak, after Origami made a small gulp she continued.

"That is, something that cannot be helped."

"……Uh."

"Provisionally, the things you said are true, about [Hermit] not wishing to have any conflicts with us —But, as the fact is, she is a Spirit. Therefore the threat of a spacequake occurring is still there. We can't just ignore this danger that threatens so many people, just for that one girl only."

It was a very accurate assertion. Kotori had also said the same thing.

Surely, if there was someone wrong it would probably be Shidou.

Shidou, shifted his eyes to his hands that were accumulating sweat, while trying to hide his expression he was grinding his molars.

In his head, he could understand what Origami just said. But he could not agree to it, no matter how he tried.

"—There is one last thing that I want to confirm."

When he said that, Origami tilted her head in curiosity.

"If you all can't confirm Spirit powers, like Tohka—there won't be any reason to attack that Spirit anymore right?"

Yes. What Shidou was saying were his idealistic thoughts. It was just too unreasonable.

—But, due to the Tohka incident there was a chance that these unreasonable thoughts might succeed.

"……"

Origami kept silent for a while before replying.

"From my point of view it is not my intention to do so. Just because her readings disappeared, it is too dangerous to leave the Spirit alone."

"……Uh, that sort of—"

"—But. To the higher ups, as long as there is no confirmation on the Spirit's reading, we have no choice but to recognize it as a human. I cannot attack her based on my own judgments."

"Whi-Which means?"

"That question, shows positive signs"

Origami said that while remaining cool.

Shidou, unconsciously drank his saliva, and gripped his hands tightly.

"—Thank you. It is enough now since I heard that."

"I see."

After Origami replied with that short sentence.

"—Is that the reason why...you said you wanted to come over today?"

Just a little, just by a little her eyelids fell, as she said those words.

Although there were no changes in her voice that has no accent, for some reason he could feel that she was unhappy.

"Uh, no……th-there is no such thing. The reason I came here today, was to talk to Tobiichi……"

As expected, he can't say anything about the puppet, so he made a lie.

Because of the intercam being dead, it became Shidou's job to conduct the search—Originally, while the camera was conducting the search, it was supposed to be Shidou's goal to distract Origami through conversation and to prevent raising any suspicions.

"……"

As soon as Origami heard Shidou's answer, the atmosphere that became a little thorny vanished in an instant.

And then, she steadily approached Shidou for a second time.

But, at that time.

UUUUUUUUUUUUuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu—

And, the spacequake alarm rang from outside.

"Th-The alarm…?"

"……"

Origami became silent for a few moments. Before standing up she took a breath.

"Origami……?"

"—Dispatch. Hurry and go to the shelter."

Origami said only that before, going out to the corridor.

Right after Shidou was left alone and was dumbfounded for a while.

"…Don't tell me, Yoshino—?"

He raised his eyebrows from the alarm that was shaking his eardrums—and gripped tightly onto the puppet inside his pocket.

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Chapter 5: Frozen Earth

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Part 1

"……!?"

Yoshino opened her eyes. And she trembled in panic.

Together with the feeling of waking up after dozing off in the dark——a gentle breeze brushed her cheeks and the view of the city flowed into her sights.

"Eh……, ah……"

Yoshino looked around her.

She was inside—a city which she does not know.

The only thing surrounding Yoshino was a crater formed from an explosion of some sort that had blasted the area off.

And the sky was cold and raining.

It was the something which she has already experienced many times, an experience that she was starting to get tired of—it was the feeling of the real world.

But if there was something different this time it would be——that her irreplaceable friend was missing from her left hand.

"……!"

From the sky, she heard a sound that she had memories of.

And over there was—as what Yoshino had predicted, a number of humans covered with machines and armor floating above her.

"—Target confirmed. All members, initiate attack."

""Yes.""

After that response the humans fired many bullets from their arms and legs at Yoshino.

"……!?"

Yoshino gasped and flew into the sky by kicking off the ground.

Just like that, to escape the attacks from the humans, she was using complex maneuvering and running away.

"Don't let her escape!"

""—Roger.""

She heard such voices echo behind her, and many more bullets were fired at her.

It was the final strike, because each attack held a lethal level of power respectively. If not for the AstralDress, the attacks would have resulted in Yoshino being killed over a 100 times; it was the incarnation of killing intent and malice.

"……!……!"

While Yoshino was dancing in the sky feeling confused, she was also raising inaudible shouts.

Her heartbeat turned rough,

Her stomach started to hurt,

And her eyes were spinning round and round.

Yoshino could not tolerate the malice and killing intent targeting her from someone else

Normally it would be—different.

Usually, [Yoshinon] would talk for her from her left hand.

Since [Yoshinon] was very reliable, it would act as if this attack was nothing to it.

That's why, Yoshino would feel safe and okay. And she would refrain from hurting everyone else.

But, right now—

"Kya……"

Yoshino felt a strong impact behind her, and while she was making a soft scream she fell to the ground.

It was not an attack that could pierce through the AstralDress. However, it was a heavy attack that sent Yoshino, with her AstralDress's protection, to the ground.

The feeling of fear was spreading inside Yoshino's heart to the extent that it could not be helped.

clatter *clatter* her tooth cried,

rattle *rattle* her legs trembled,

shake *shake* and her sights was shaking.

The inside of her head was already mushy to the level that it can’t be helped.

"U, a,a……"

zaa,*zaa*-----and the rain had gotten even stronger.

"—Okay, let us up this all the way."

At the same time when the leader styled lady said those words, all the humans and their ominous weapons were all pointed at Yoshino at once.

And then, from the machines, the most killing intent they have released so far was poured into it, and took shape before it was launched at her.

Just the moment before impact. Yoshino raised her right hand high up to the sky.

—and.

"……<Zadkiel>……!?"

She swings her hands down, together with the angel's name.

"——Took her down!?"

Ryouko's mildly excited voice was heard through the transmitter.

While Origami was making a long and thin sigh, without lowering her guard she looked around the surface of the earth covered with smoke.

"……"

It had been almost 30 minutes, after the residents had finished evacuating and the alarm rang.

The moment they confirmed [Hermit]'s figure, Origami and the rest of the team immediately began their extermination plan.

Right now in the area were 9 members of the AST floating on the air, covered with long-ranged equipment.

Together with the wiring suits covering them and the normal thrusters unit as its center, it was extermination equipment that has a whole bunch of anti-Spirit ammunition loaded in it.

Normally the weight of the equipment would be too heavy to move around with but —it was compensated by the gravity neutralizing absolute power field, the Territory which is brought forth by the Realizer.

All of the members were facing the visitor, the [Hermit], and Ryouko was watching the situation.

"Wha—?"

The voice of someone filled with confusion was, delivered to all of the members ears through the transmitter.

The smoke covering the area where [Yoshino] fell dispersed immediately—and from the inside of the smoke, the figure of a doll with a slow-witted silhouette appeared, which was unconfirmed until just a few moments ago.

—On its back, [Hermit]'s small body was tightly attached to it.

"That is—"

The sound of Ryouko's voice through the transmitter shook Origami's eardrum.

There was a memory of that doll. It was the weapon [Hermit] summoned from last time—the Angel.

And thus, the puppet took a slouching posture, and when she thought that both its front legs touched the ground, *Guoooo*, a white smoke-like substance was released out of the abdomen part right pass the four legs, and from the mouth.

The puppet then turned its head and faced toward the sky.

—*KuooooOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO*———

And, it raised a strange roar that left a buzzing in the ears.

When it did that—the doll as the center, a crispy sound came from the ground, and the ground turned white and increased in radius.

"Wha-What is this……!?"

A voice of a team member filled with uneasiness echoed.

But [Hermit]'s doll did not care about the team, and continued letting out an evil cold air and roars.

Each time it did that, the ground continued turning white.

"……"

Origami sent her sights to left and right.





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The image that was projected in her sights was—the whole city, having the same phenomenon occurring.

Suddenly the puddles made from the heavy rain started to rise, and instantly froze to form countless commercialized-like needle shaped ice.

The frost was creeping and falling around the city's road and building, the situation was like having one whole city being put into a freezer.

In the blink of an eye—Origami and the others had their vision covered in ice.

And adding on to this terrible situation, the area they are in right now was getting endlessly supplied with water from the sky.

When the large quantity of raindrops, touched the ground covered in ice, it was immediately absorbed into the ground.

An endless invasion and the growing of ice castles.

That was what; Tenguu city was covered up with.

"……Kuh! All members! Don't falter! Shoot!"

Together with Ryouko's orders, Origami fired that instruction into her brain.

And the muzzle's equipped onto her whole body, activated all at once.

The other AST members acted the same, and fired at [Hermit] with all ammunition they had left.

But—

"……"

Origami stopped breathing for a moment.

Before their ammunitions reached [Hermit], they froze far from it, without even igniting, the ammunition fell to the ground.

Origami immediately sent instructions to her brain, and simple analysis was put into operation.

When she did that, many weak but vast amounts of Spirit energy readings appeared on her view, it was so much that it was scary.

"Wha……what is going on?"

"—It is probably, the rain's fault."

"Ah, rain?"

In the midst of the team's confusion, Origami made a short answer.

"Yes, although it is little, the rain contains Spirit power."

The heavy rain left no gaps in her view.

The moment it touched the ammunition, it would get covered in ice and even the firepower would freeze before falling to the ground.

The rain covered in the Spirits power and the cold air. In this curtain of water, and the ice castles that covered the land, acted as a strong protective wall to protect its enshrined master.

"……!"

And—at that moment, [Hermit] showed some movement while she was attached to the giant dolls back.

Guooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo——and it raised a roar that was like the sound of a moving machine, this roar was larger compared to just now, the doll then bent its body backwards.

That aspect was a little different from usual.

Yes, putting it into words, instead of releasing cold air, it was as if it was sucking in the atmosphere by taking a big breath.

"……..! All members, take cover!"

The same time Ryouko made that order, she sent mental instructions from her brain to the thruster units, and left the airspace where Origami and the others were floating just a moment ago.

That instant, when she thought that, the doll moved its head back to its normal spot,

together with an unpleasant sound that can tear her ears apart, from the mouth, a blue beam was released.

"Uwa……!?"

"Gu——"

In the transmitter, she could hear the voice of anguish from the other members. It would seem that, it was too late to run away.

"_____"

She made her body spin midair, and took a glimpse downwards.

Over there were 2 ice boulders with a radius of 3 meters, *roll* *roll* that were rolling around.

There was no mistake. It was the owners of the anguished voices she heard from the other side of the transmitter just now.

"……., Did they get frozen together with the Territory……? This isn't a joke……!?"

"……"

While hearing the other team members voice, Origami brought her eyes to [Hermit]'s behavior without lowering her guard.

And—maybe [Hermit] felt that the AST members were in disarray, it showed some movement once again.

When it thought that Origami and the others had turned their backs, the doll landed onto the ground with its four legs, and just like that with tremendous speed, it ran away like it was sliding on the frozen ground.

"Kuh…….we are chasing her!"

""Roger!""

Origami and the others sent the instructions to their own brains, and drove the Thruster units.

converted by Infinite Creations

Part 2

"…….!?"

Tohka was sleeping in the deepest room located on the second floor of the Itsuka house; she immediately raised her face up when the unexpected sound of explosions echoed.

"Wha-What……..!?"

She raised her body because she was surprised by the dangerous situation, *rumble* *rumble*, she opened the window while these sounds happened.

At that moment, Tohka shook her body unconsciously.

Instead of an outrageous feeling of fear, she shivered from the unexpected coldness, of the wind that entered from outside the window.

It was so weird that the surrounding temperature was dropping. Tohka looked around in a bad mood while frowning.

"Th-This is……"

Rain was pouring down on one side of her view , what's more, the moment the raindrop touched the ground it froze up and turned to ice.

"Wha-What on earth is happening now……"

And, at that moment, she suddenly remembered something from just now.

During the time she was having an afternoon nap, she felt that something like the sound of Uuuuuuuuuuuu——echoed.

She thought that it was a dream or something, but that was……

"Was that……the thing called the alarm…….!? Which means this is the…….spacequake?"

The image of the explosion and so on was quite different from what she heard from instructor Tama-chan , from what she can see, it was a strange situation. She has to

hurry and evacuate to the so called shelter.

And—at that moment when Tohka was about to leave the room.

"……!?"

Outside the window, a strange object passed by with tremendous speed.

It was a doll with a body length of 3 meters that had a short and stout form.

What's more on the back of the doll, it was being ridden by a girl with a green colored coat.

"That was……from that time."

Yes, that was the girl that Shidou had met up with.

The same time she confirmed that, Tohka, felt a shaking in her heart.

She does not have any basis. But for some reason—she couldn't help but feel that Shidou might be with that girl.

"……"

After biting her lips, Tohka ran out of the room.

converted by Infinite Creations

Part 3

"Wha……, what the heck, is this……?"

While holding the puppet in his hand, Shidou who had just left the apartment opened his eyes wide at the view that was spreading in front of him.

At any rate, the town's landscape that he was familiar with, turned into a winter wonderland.

What's more, it was not snow accumulating on it. The town was purely, frozen.

"—Did you not hear the alarm? It's Yoshino."

From the intercam that had been keeping its silence, he could hear Kotori's voice from it.

"Leaving that aside. What were you doing before the Spirit manifested? You took quite a sweet time leaving the room."

"……No, I got caught by a birdlime[2E 1] that was set up at the front entrance."

Yes, when he was trying to leave Origami's room, his leg got grabbed by the trap; it was something that would slow him down from going outside.

……But it was a weird trap. Although it would take someone's time but it was not a trap that was impossible to escape from. If he were to say which it was, instead of catching an intruder from outside, it would be to slow someone down from escaping from inside…

"……Nononono."

Now was not the time to be worrying about such things. He shook his head and regained his thoughts.

"So this is…Yoshino's doing?"

"Yes."

He said that while viewing the city covered in ice and Kotori replied back to him.

"It is not a situation where you can take your time leisurely and make plans. The rain water was supposed to be drained originally but even that got frozen up, if this situation continues there might be a chance that serious damage could be caused to the ground and underground shelter."

After taking a deep breath, Kotori continued on.

"—The only ones that can stop Yoshino are you, and that puppet. Will you go for it?"

"Of course. I can't leave Yoshino and the city like this anymore."

"……Shin, I have one thing to say too, is it okay?"

And, from the intercam, he heard a sleepy voice. It was Reine.

"……I did a lot of investigating but—it would seem, your question was not necessarily a misunderstanding."

Speaking of the—Question, it was probably what Shidou asked, when Yoshino visited his house a few days ago.

Now that he thought about it, he felt that Kotori did mention she would get Reine to investigate it.

"……Since we don't have time I will tell you the brief details. Yoshino is—"

Reine explained the situation briefly.

"……"

The same time when he heard that, a feeling of his heart being tightly squeezed, passed throughout Shidou's whole body.

But—mysteriously it wasn't that surprising.

The only feeling he had was an agreement of, *aah*, if it's Yoshino then, it's understandable——

And the absolute conviction of, as expected I need to save the girl.

"……Kotori."

He looked at the city again and took a breath. He then made his determination by, hitting his chest a few times which was beating violently.

She might have guessed Shidou's intention just by that, Kotori's voice resounded back.

"—Very well. Run straight to the right, until you get out of the main street. Looking at the speed and the direction Yoshino is heading, you will reach there in approximately 5 minutes. If it is from that spot you can reach that location before her."

"Roger……!"

Receiving his instructions, he swiftly stepped on the ground firmly. But,

"Hurry and finish increasing her affection level, and give her a kiss."

"……Uhh."

……It was a specific way to say it out of the mouth, Shidou became a little shy from that.

"What's wrong? Is there a problem?"

"N-No…….Although it is not about that but……..errr."

Shidou said that while lightly blushing, Kotori made a [haa] sigh like she was tired of him.

"Why are you getting embarrassed now? It's not like this is the first time you've done it."

From Kotoris words, Shidou remembered what had happened inside the department store, his face turned even redder because of that.

"Th……That, might be true but……No, how'd I put this? Although it was like an accident at that time but..If I am suppose to do it intentionally, then it feels like a crime or something…"

"—Aah, what is this? Is there a chance that Shidou might be a lolicon?"

"……Th, tha, that's wrong!"

"That reaction. Bull’s-eye? Is your strike-zone from middle school and below? Kyaa—scary. I have to be careful from now on."

Kotori said mischievously.

"Oi oi."

And Shidou replied back while scratching his cheeks.

"No, that won't happen."

No matter how much he wasn't connected by blood, Kotori was his sister and they have been brought up together since they were young.

As expected, there was no way such a thing would happen.

"……"

"Kotori?"

"Shut up, hurry up and go!"

It was rare for Kotori, in her oppressive Commander mode, to raise her voice while shouting.

"Wha-What's wrong with her……?"

While Shidou was feeling it was hard to understand her, he dashed in the middle of the cold rain.

He was somehow maintaining his speed, while running on the frozen road.

And immediately he arrived at the main street with no one in sight—he then firmly gripped his foot on the ground.

"—She's coming."

Right after Kotori's warning—immediately, he saw a slow-witted silhouette.

It was a smooth and inorganic form. On its head, long rabbit-like ears. There was no mistake. It was the Angel <Zadkiel> Yoshino summoned.

Shidou, raised his voice until his vocal cords almost got crushed.

"—Yoshinooooooooooo!"

"……!"

Yoshino who was attached to the back of the doll which was moving at extreme speeds, showed some reaction.

It would seem, that she noticed Shidou.

<Zadkiel> that was moving like it was sliding on the frozen road, stopped right in front of Shidou.

And when he thought the slow-witted doll bent its body, Yoshino who was attached to the back, raised her face that was soggy from crying.

"H-Hey, Yoshino. Long time no see."

"……Shidou-san……"

Yoshino raised her body, and *un* *un* vertically swung her head.

At that occasion, Yoshino pulled out her hand that was inserted in the hole behind <Zadkiel>'s back. On Yoshino's finger many ring-like objects were shining, and from inside <Zadkiel>'s interior, there were thin treads stretched out. Like a puppet, it might be used to control <Zadkiel>'s movements.

"Yoshino, there is something I want to give to you."

"……?"

After wiping her tears with her sleeves, Yoshino tilted her head as if questioning him.

"Aah, this is—"

And, that moment when Shidou took out the puppet that was kept in his pocket.

"Shidou!"

The same time when Kotori's voice echoed, from behind Shidou a light beam of some sort, was aimed and fired at Yoshino.

The shot grazed the tip of Yoshino's shoulder and her cheek, as it continued on

passing behind her.

"Wha……?"

Shidou's voice clogged up, and he immediately turned his head to look behind him.

Over there was Origami covered with overly exaggerated equipment, and was floating on air while carrying a large cannon.

"O-Origami……"

And what's more, it was not only that. Wondering when it happened, in Shidou and Yoshino's surroundings, AST magicians were gathering around them.

"—That young man over there. It's dangerous. Distance yourself from that girl."

With a voice that was passed through using a machine, the woman that appeared to be the captain made a practical speech.

But,

"U——ah, ah, ah, ah, ah……"

And immediately such a voice came from behind him; Shidou turned his face back to its original direction.

Yoshino looked at the AST members figure and, *tremble* *tremble* her body started trembling.

"……Uh."

Shidou, raised his eyebrows and gasped.

"Ah, aaaah, UAAAAAAAaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh---------!"

She shouted, Yoshino then inserted both her arms into <Zadkiel> again.

And while spreading an extremely cold air around it, it slides towards its back direction.

"U,Yoshino…….! Wait!"

Shidou's entreaty could not reach.

<Zadkiel> which was being controlled by Yoshino, was *Guuooooooooooooooooo*--------making such sounds while sucking in the surrounding atmosphere.

"Th-That is……..!"

Tohka who had been running in the frozen city, was frightened at the scenery she was looking at.

In the cleared up road, she was able to recognize the figures of Shidou, the blue haired girl she saw a few days ago, and also the AST members standing there.

And, the girl driving the doll retreated to the back of the doll and, the doll bent backwards and started sucking in the surrounding atmosphere.

"——Uh."

Tohka felt a cold chilly feeling deep down her stomach.

The only level she could describe that feeling was it an instinct of some sort, but somehow she understood what that was. And that thing was—not something good.

It was hard to put into words but, yes, the shaking of the atmosphere and the moment before Tohka uses <Sandalphon> with all her might to make a final blow, it was extremely similar.

"…….., shidou!"

Tohka raised her voice.

But, she understood that even if she did call out to him there was no meaning for doing so.

Tohka immediately stomped her heel on the ground.

"<Sandalphon>……!"

And, she called that name. It was Tohka's final sword, the throne. It was the name of the miracle that held a shape.

"……, Kuh—"

But nothing happened. Tohka distorted her face.

It was not like she did not predict this. She did receive many explanations from Kotori and the others, just in case.

Like what kind of existence Tohka was. And what Kotori and the others were planning to do with Tohka.

And following that process, Tohka was also told why her powers were sealed up.

Naturally, it would be a lie if she wasn't uneasy at first. That's because the power she had until now, suddenly disappeared all in one day.

Depending on the situation, she understood that it was a necessary factor to lead a normal life with Shidou and the other humans.

Honestly speaking—Tohka's current lifestyle was unbearably fun.

Although she was still intolerant of Origami, and still does not completely trust Kotori or Reine.

But, the days passed together with Shidou, were shining radiantly and were flowing with feelings she had never felt before.

—But.

"<Sandalphon>——<Sandalphon>! <Sandalphon>……uh!"

For the sake of saving Shidou, right now, she once again sought for the power that was supposed to be unneeded.

She stomped her heel to the floor, over and over again.

But, no matter how much she tried; <Sandalphon> would not manifest itself.

"Kuh—I beg you……Please come out, <Sandalphon>……!"

She clenched her teeth, and her eyebrows approached each other, while she was close to crying, she continued kicking the floor.

"……Kuh."

Inside her head, the clear scene of Shidou falling down from the assassination bullet

resurfaced.

His stomach completely gouged out. Shidou falling down powerless. Herself not being able to do anything.

She absolutely does not want to experience that again.

—At that moment, the girl's <Zadkiel> moved its head back to its original position.

"……Uh!"

wobbling *shaking* Tohka's mental state, was turning unstable. The tremendous amount of stress which was enough to blow her conscious away was, overrunning inside Tohka's head.

"Ku—a, aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

And then, the moment when <Zadkiel> released the condensed cold air from its mouth.

"U-Uuwahh……!?"

Shidou fell on his butt unintentionally.

He was overpowered by <Zadkiel>'s tremendous pressure.

The AST members that were spread out in his surroundings initiated a barrage of attacks on <Zadkiel> when it began sucking in the surrounding atmosphere, but all the attacks were blocked by the surrounding rain.

And thus——an extremely strong stream of cold air was released by Yoshino’s <Zadkiel>.

"Wha——?"

Although he did not know about the details but from the only knowledge he had, it was an attack that would probably rob Shidou of his life, and he somehow expected that this would be the case.

Judging from the timing and speed—it was something that was impossible to avoid.

"Shidou—"

And, he heard Origami's voice, but it was too late. Shidou closed his eyes unintentionally—

After his body was stiff for a few seconds, but feeling no discomfort, he wrung his neck and opened his eyes.

"Thi-This is—?"

And while he was dumbfounded he opened his mouth.

It was because, before Shidou knew it, a giant throne was rising in front of him, and it might have protected Shidou from Yoshino's attack.

"San....<Sandalphon>…….?"

Yes. It was the luxurious throne with the texture of metal. On the steel blue colored armrest, the back of the sword's handle was popping its face out like it was peeping.

That was, none other than Spirit Tohka's peerless weapon—<Sandalphon>.

"Wh-Why is this—?"

"—It’s simple."

From his right ear, Kotori's voice echoed.

"Kotori……? What does this mean? Wasn't Tohka's power sealed?"

"I told you before. If Tohka's mental state turns unstable, there is a chance that the supposedly sealed powers would counter-flow back, from Shidou to Tohka—Although it is far from her full powers but it was unexpected for her to be able to summon her angel……Well aren’t you loved, Shidou?"

"Huh…….? S-So why is Tohka's—"

When Shidou was flabbergasted, there were movements in the surroundings.

Shidou was not the only one that was surprised at the throne that suddenly appeared. Yoshino made a face as if she saw something that was out of this world, and immediately controlled <Zadkiel> and used it to run away with incredible speed.

The AST members activated their thrusters and chased after her.

Origami also took a glance at the luxurious throne in front of Shidou, and after making a small frown; she followed the other AST members and chased after Yoshino.

"……"

After Shidou has been blankly pre-occupied for a few moments, he immediately opened his eyes wide.

"Oh yeah, I need to chase after Yoshino too—"

And,

"shidou!"

From behind, he heard his name being called out.

It was a cute tone, and a unique intonation. And what was more importantly, the luxurious throne right in front of him. There was no need to figure out who the owner of that voice was—it was Tohka.

"Tohka……huh? Eh—?"

But when Shidou faced towards her, he opened his eyes wide upon Tohka's figure that he was not familiar with seeing.

Tohka was wearing her usual Raizen high school uniform but—whether it's her chest or skirt, her most important parts were, swayed with a beautiful light membrane.

"Tohka, what is that…….?"

"Nu?"

When Shidou said that, Tohka drop her sights down and looked at her own body while blinking in surprise.

"Ooo!? What is this! AstralDress!?"

It would seem that she has finally realized what her current state is after being pointed out. Tohka raised a surprised voice.

And after a few moments, of patting and touching the light membrane, she

immediately raised her face and returned her sights to Shidou's direction.

"More importantly—shidou, are you okay? Are you injured?"

"Ah……aah. Thanks to you."

Shidou replied while looking up at the luxurious throne rising in front of him.

And when he did that, Tohka looked away awkwardly and continued on with a shaky voice.

"Err……..about that, I, I am sorry……in a lot of ways."

"Eh……?"

When Shidou replied blankly, Tohka [muumuu] gave a groan.

"That's why……! I was, irritated by something I don't know and……err, I couldn't express my gratitude to shidou……since I caused many problems so—I always, wanted to apologize to you……"

"No……that, it was my fault anyway……"

Although he was supposed to show some courtesy on denying Tohka's words but—there was no time, now.

Shidou *gulp* swallowed his saliva.

The Angel <Sandalphon> and also the AstralDress, which belongs to the Spirit known as Tohka.

Even she was not in the complete condition but it does not change the facts of her still having superpower that exceeds mankind.

The Spirit powers that could oppose Yoshino's <Zadkiel>. And also the AST's CR units.

Shidou immersed himself with his thoughts for a few seconds and fixed his eyes back to Tohka.

"—Tohka, I have a request."

"Nu……? Why the sudden formalities?"

Tohka wrung her neck curiously.

Shidou fell to his knees without any hesitation at all, and lowered his head very low.

"Shi-shidou?"

"—I beg you. Lend me your power. I know asking something like this from you is unreasonable. But, I want—her, I have to save Yoshino no matter what……!"

"……"

After she was silent for a moment, Tohka echoed her voice a little.

"The Yoshino you're talking about—is that girl?"

"Aah."

"……Uh."

After shortening her breath, Tohka continued on with her words. She was somewhat —sad.

"……I see. As I thought, that girl is important. —More than...me."

"……Uh? Who said something like that?"

Shidou raised his face, and saw Tohka's eyes.

"Eh……?"

"That’s wrong—It's not something like....that."

"Shidou. That's dangerous. Don't tell Tohka any unnecessary information—"

He ignored what Kotori said and opened his lips.

"That girl—is the same as you, Tohka."

"Same……?"

"Aah, Yoshino is the same as you——a Spirit."

"……!? That girl is?"

Tohka made a dubious voice while raising her eyebrows.

"—That is not all. Because she...also holds powers that she can't do anything about on her own, just like you, she has been feeling pain all this time……!"

"……"

"I—promised her. That I will become a hero and I will save her. ……But, with only my power, I can't even chase after her……!"

Once again, he lowered his head deeply.

"I beg you, Tohka. Please lend me……your power!"

"……"

The silence flowed by.

But—it did not continue for very long.

Suuuu--…..haaaaaaa, he heard the sound of someone breathing.

"……Uh, haha."

The echo of the small laugh was also heard.

When he raised his face, he understood that Tohka was putting her hand on her forehead.

And that mouth, started moving.

"……Aah, I see. That's right. How did I forget something like this. —The person who saved me, was this kind of man."

"Tohka……?"

Because of the rain, he could not properly hear what Tohka just said. He replied back to her in doubt.

But without replying back, Tohka immediately turned her body around.

"—All I have to do is chase after that girl, right?"

Tohka's dignified voice was shaking inside Shidou's eardrum, as if it was erasing the sound of the rain.

"……., Tohka!"

"Don't say anymore. Time is precious."

After saying that she walked a few steps and, *GAN*! She kicked the luxurious throne <Sandalphon> that was at that spot.

When she did that, the giant throne fell forward and transformed into a weird shape.

"Thi-This is—?"

"Ride it. You're in a hurry right?"

When Tohka rode on the back part of the throne, she urged Shidou to get on.

"Ah, aah……"

While being perplexed, Shidou followed Tohka and rode on <Sandalphon>. Instead of a throne, it has the appearance of an awkwardly shaped boat or a surf board.

"—Grab on."

And, at the same time Tohka said those short words.

"……!?"

With incredible acceleration, <Sandalphon> started sliding on the frozen ground.

His body was attacked by murderous wind pressure and gravity. Shidou immediately clung onto the decorations on the back.

But Tohka was barely grabbing onto anything, and was standing calmly on the back of <Sandalphon> as if she had strong magnets equipped under the soles of her feet.

"If we hold back on the speed we're going to lose sight of her! We're going on like this!"

"O—Ou……"

Inside the incredible wind pressure, Shidou barely let out his voice.

"—Seriously."

And, from the intercam on his right ear, a voice as if someone gave up echoed. It was Kotori.

"Although Tohka responded quite well, it was all good but—that was careless, Shidou."

"Sorry, I will listen to your preaching later…! Just lend me your power now without saying anything, Kotori……!"

When Shidou said that, Kotori made a sigh, and continued talking.

"—Of course. It is our mission to save the Spirits. We will not waste any effort when helping you."

"I'm in debt to you……!"

And, at that moment <Sandalphon>'s speed increased. Shidou put strength in his neck, and somehow put his foot on the back of <Sandalphon>, and while being supported by Tohka they continued advancing on the ice.

converted by Infinite Creations

Part 4

"——B team, go on ahead! We're going to trap [Hermit]!"

""Roger!""

From the transmitter, she heard the voices of Ryouko and the other AST members responding to her.

Origami together with 2 members of the AST, delicately changed their direction, and withdrew from the main team chasing after [Hermit].

The target location would be around 1 kilometer ahead from the intersection point.

While the Territory was neutralizing the G force, which was strong enough to normally make someone's consciousness turn hazy or make it impossible to open their eyes due to the wind pressure, they reached the targeted location.

"……"

And with the feeling of kicking the air she used the brakes, and diverted to that direction.

In her sights, she already caught a glimpse of the [Hermit] advancing in her direction.

At the same time the 3 members as the B team confirmed the sighting, they dispatched themselves to left and right, they made an instruction in their minds and 2 anchor units which were equipped with the thrusters under their armpits, were shot out to the ground.

From the total of 6 anchor units light threads were stretched out, and entangled with each other to form a net.

"——Deployment of the laser web completed, machine Beta and Gamma tied together confirmed."

"Okay, we're going to corner her!"

When Origami said that, she heard Ryouko's shouting voice through the transmitter

which was chasing after the [Hermit].

"……!?"

[Hermit] finally arrived and seemed to have realized that an ambush has been set for her.

But——it was too late.

From the front, and both the left and right the light of an entangled net with magic barred her way.

From behind, Ryouko and the A team were pursuing her.

And from above, Origami and the B team were floating with the completed Laser web.

"A———ah, ah, aah……——"

The [Hermit] who was attached to the back of the doll, opened her eyes wide and let out a voice filled with despair.

"All members—attack!"

However, the AST did not show any sympathy or mercy to the opposing Spirit.

Together with the orders, all of the AST members pulled out the laser blade <No pain> which is a standard high-powered close combat equipment, and charged at [Hermit].

—But,

"U…….a, aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhh—!?"

The same time with [Hermit]'s scream, there was an incredible turbulence occurring in the surrounding.

And the raindrops that were pouring down froze up and turned into hail, swirled around and covering [Hermit]; it became the shape of a blizzard dome.

Origami did not care about it, and swung down the <No pain> at the ice storm barrier protecting [Hermit].

However, there was an immediate change.

From the point that touched the barrier, the <No pain>'s blade and Origami's surrounding Territory were making a cracking sound and begun to freeze up.

Origami immediately, made the sword <No pain> vanish, and de-activated her Territory.

"……Ku――"

The weight of her body and the equipments she was wearing, suddenly returned and the scenery which she was clearly visible until now turned blurry and she became unable to see.

In addition to that, the piercing cold air that was filled in the city and the cold raindrops pouring down from the sky, attacked Origami's body for the first time.

In the blink of an eye, from the greenhouse environment it became something like climbing a snow mountain in the middle of winter. Her heart made a big leap as if she got frightened, and it made Origami's breathing painful.

"Basic Territory re-activate."

Inside the exhausting feeling close to making her fainting, she somehow managed to get that language out of her mouth.

When she did that, an invisible barrier once again manifested around Origami, and gently made her body float. She activated her thrusters, and somehow managed to escape from [Hermit]'s barrier.

"Kuh……Everyone, are you alright!?"

Ryouko's voice was heard. They might have used the same method as Origami to escape [Hermit]'s barrier too.

But when all the responding voices were counted, including Origami, the total was only 5.

2 more people probably got frozen together with their Territory.

"……"

Origami brought her eyes to the blizzard dome that was born on top of the frozen road.

Gooooooooooooo——it was making low howls while winding up a whirlpool, it has a hemisphere of an estimated radius of 10 meters.

The ice bullets imbued with the Spirit's mana raged, and formed a fortress of cold air.

Plasma blade and the Territory which normally has no substance were also frozen, it became obviously clear that this isn't a normal blizzard.

"Tsk……this is annoying. What are we going to do about this?"

"—It is not like there is no way."

She having said that remark, she sent the data of the barrier which she had scanned earlier ago to the other members.

"This is……"

"Yes. The value of mana covering the barrier is not a big deal. It will react to the magic output of our Territory, and would temporarily focus its defensive power on that one spot."

"Which means……in a de-activated Territory condition, we won't get frozen?"

"Probably."

When Origami said that, Ryouko groaned with difficulty.

"That doesn't sound so realistic. No matter how much we can escape getting frozen up, it is still a barrier with lumps of ice bullets whirling around it. Although the wiring suits has some bullet-proof properties built-in but……I don't think our body would hold out until we reach her."

Ryouko said that, and another member raised her opinion.

"How about—a bombardment of attacks using a gun with no magic applied to them."

"……That would also difficult. Even if by any chance we were able to pass

through the barrier, the Spirit still has its AstralDress you know? Using a physical attack which is not covered in magic, we wouldn’t even cause any injury to the Spirit after all."

That is true, what Ryouko said actually does make sense.

The Spirits' AstralDress, can only be broken by the magic output released by the Realizer.

However, the barrier of this blizzard that is covering the surrounding has that kind of magic readings.

It is a 2 layered wall of different attributes. That was a troublesome thing.

But, Origami activated her thrusters and, flew up to the sky.

"Origami?"

"Doing it like this is okay."

Origami muttered that, cast her eyes down and prepared her breathing, to increase her focus.

And in her surrounding, the territory that was deployed which normally has a radius of 3 meters instantly expanded to nearly 10 meters.

The radius of the territory, the more it expanded, the lower the density would become which causes its ability value to drop.

The territory now which had now expanded to a 10 meter class radius would probably not be able to stop the Spirits attacks.

But—right now this was okay. Just like that Origami got close to a residential apartment nearby.

"——!"

—*GOGOGOGOGO*……!

The top part of the building that enters the range of the expanded Territory got twisted out, and was grabbed mid-air.

The concrete of the outer wall was peeling off, the heat insulated materials were

shredding, and a sound that was painful to the ears sounded and the concrete foundation of the building was forcibly twisted out. It might be the furniture of the offices inside the building, whether its personal computers or documents these things were leaked out of the Territory, and falling away separately.

It was quite heavy. Her brain started to get the intense burden and a violent headache attacked Origami.

"O-Origami……!? What the heck are you doing?"

Origami didn't care about her and continue making the top part of the building float, she then flew above the [Hermit]'s barrier.

And then, after taking a small breath she said,

"Crush her, with a good amount of materials. With this, the barrier should de-activate for an instant. And we aim that."

"……Seriously, you're always so reckless……!"

After Ryouko said that with a sigh mixed in it, she gave her orders.

"Everyone, did you hear that!? Although it is rough but there seems to be no other way. All members, charge output to maximum and standby outside the barrier's range! Everyone is going to attack at the same time when the barrier disappears!"

""Roger!""

The remaining AST wizards, were readying their stance with all of their equipments and activated their Realizers.

Origami prepared by breathing, and swung down the hand that was carrying the building.

The lump of metal and concrete that has an incredible weight, dropped right down towards the blizzard dome.

—But,

Origami distorted her eyebrows a little.

On the building parts that she had just dropped, she was attracted to one line on it,

and following along with the line, the giant lump of concrete got split into two.

"……"

No—that was not all.

The separated debris was chopped finely into pieces and what's more it all happened in a flash.

By the time it touched the ground, all of it turned into fragments and smaller debris.

And the [Hermit]'s barrier was—still, going strong.

"This is—"

And the moment she made that voice, from her ear *Beep* *Beep* an ear hurting buzzer got delivered.

"Origami! Th-The Spirit readings increased! This reading is—"

Before Ryouko could even finish, Origami made the Territory which had expanded to almost 10 meter class, condense to almost 2 meters which is smaller than her usual one.

The large-scaled equipments that were struck outside the Territory field followed the laws of gravity and fell to the ground.

At that moment—in front of Origami, night colored hair danced.

"……!"

At the Territory that was jammed together to increase the defensive characteristics, an intense burden was forced on it.

There was no need to even think about the reason. It was because the girl that appeared right in front of her, came slicing at Origami with her sword.

"Fuun, you defended against that huh?"

"……Yatogami…Tohka."

Origami said that name like she was groaning, and drew out the laser blade <No pain> from her hips, and released a sword strike at Tohka whose body was covered

here and there by her thin AstralDress.

"To——"

After Tohka dodged that in a flash, she rested her legs on top of the rooftop fence on a nearby building.

"What are you doing here?"

While facing the sword of light at her, she asked the Tohka that suddenly appeared.

While flipping her front hair that was wet from the rain to the back, Tohka made an inappropriate smile.

"—Fuun, sorry about that, I will not let you disturb shidou."

"……"

Despite wondering why Shidou's name came up, Origami fixed her grip on <No pain>.

"Kuh—why did [Princess] appear here? Did she come here to save [Hermit]?"

Ryouko said that irritated.

Yes. The Spirit with an AAA rank—codename [Princess].

From the girl in front of her, the Spirit reading which usually can't be detected was now, giving out a weak signal.

"——Kuh, we'll deal with [Hermit] later. All members change your target to [Princess]!"

Ryouko shouted—it might be the most appropriate decision.

It might be the chance to shoot [Hermit] but they would be helpless if [Princess] attacked them, when they are focusing on shooting.

The barrier was certainly a problem but as long as they take some distance from it, the [Hermit] would not commence an attack on her own, it was a natural decision to postpone her attack.



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But—she wondered why.

Ryouko and the others floated up from the ground, and looked at Tohka who was looking in their direction; she felt that Tohka made a small nod. It was like—her expectations were going along as planned.

However, there was not enough time for careful consideration. When Tohka kicked the building fence, she once again lifted her sword and approached Origami.

"Kuh—"

Origami fixed her grip on her sword of light and, kicked the sky to accept her challenge.

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Part 5

Going back 3 minutes before the, situation.

"—What is that!? shidou!"

On the <Sandalphon> that was riding on the frozen road with super speed, Shidou was supported by Tohka and was barely holding on. When Tohka said that, Shidou raised his face accordingly.

"……Wha……!"

It was quite a strange scenery.

On the ground a whirling blizzard, it was a beautifully made hemisphere—and surrounding it were the AST wizards, who were preparing themselves with their exaggerated weapons.

"What the heck—is that…….!"

"……It's the barrier Yoshino constructed. Fumu, it was made quite well."

The moment Shidou said that, Reine explained briefly the analytical results on the dome of cold air.

Magic—which means, it was a fortress of ice that commences an auto-counterattack when it reacts to the output of AST's CR units magic attacks.

From Reine's information, Shidou simplified it even further before explaining it to Tohka. Tohka [muu……] put her hands under her jaws and groaned difficultly.

And, this time, Kotori's voice was shaking his right ear eardrum.

"Things have become troubling. With it like that, no one can get close to Yoshino."

If thinking normally, it was true.

But—*Gulp* Shidou drank down his saliva and, [No] moved his lips.

There's one more. There was something that was still bothering him.

"Although it is something that we have to test to find out but……but it might not be exactly necessary."

"What did you say?"

And, a change appeared in the scenery further in front.

When he thought that Origami floated to the sky, she tore out the top part of a nearby building, and transported it above Yoshino's barrier.

"Wha……?"

"—Tsk, is she planning to shatter the barrier like that? That's quite a drastic way to do it."

Kotori, said it irritatingly.

"Wha-What should we do to—"

And, the moment Shidou said that.

"—Un."

Tohka who was standing nearby him shook her throat a little.

"shidou is going to use that method of some sort...that you know about...to save that Yoshino something?"

"……No, err……I don't know whether it's possible or not—"

When she said that, he clenched his teeth.

"—No, there is a way. I will do something about it……definitely."

"I see."

When Tohka said that, *grin*, and she raised the edge of her lips.

"Tohka……?"

"Then, I'll leave that problem to shidou. Leave the AST or whatever to me. I definitely won't...let them disturb shidou."

Tohka left those words, and ran on forward from the <Sandalphon> that was still moving—when she grabbed the handle of the sword that was sprung out of the pointed end at the back of the throne.

She then kicked the back of the chair just like that, and flew in midair—she flew towards the direction of Origami, who was still carrying the building.

"Tha....that girl…….!"

While Shidou was still clinging onto <Sandalphon> that was still moving, he opened his eyes wide in surprise.

But, he immediately bit the inside of his mouth and fixed his thoughts, and sternly faced forward.

The thing she was going to do now was dangerous, but he was not going to shout on how reckless it was.

The Spirit Tohka. The girl that had finally managed to escape the endless cycle of battles.

That girl was now—to save Yoshino—and also to support Shidou's determination, has once again jumped into the battlefield.

Other than repaying back that resolution, there are no other existing actions that Shidou could do now to be forgiven—!

Shidou lowered his body, and while clinging onto <Sandalphon>, he rushed towards Yoshino's barrier.

And in the middle of going there, to make his final confirmation, Shidou asked Kotori a question.

"—Kotori. There is something I want to confirm with you."

"What is it?"

"Since it was something that I was not really worried about, there was one thing……I had forgotten to ask. I...on the day when Tohka's power was sealed—was shot by Origami right?"

Yes. If Shidou memories are correct. On that day, Shidou was mistakenly sniped by

Origami.

And then, he was injured, with a wound that a normal person would not be saved from.

After a silence of one beat, Kotori replied back.

"Yes. —That's the truth."

"What on earth……was that? Is that also, among my abilities that is unexplainable?"

"……That would be, half correct and half wrong."

"And you're saying?"

When he asked back, after Kotori made a groan like she was in a dilemma, she then continued her words.

"It is exactly true that it is among Shidou's ability. By any occasion when your body has received a life-threatening damage, your body will be ignited with fire and, once again be revived. It is a shameful undead monster cheat ability. —It is not like, we are, letting it remain unexplainable."

Shidou stared into wonder.

But—there is no time for that now.

"—Right now, I will not ask for what the reason is for now. But there is something I want to ask again. Even if I get injured by a life-threatening injury, I can recover from that. There are no mistakes there right?"

"—Yes. That is an affirmative."

Kotori replied back, Shidou took a deep breath.

"……That's great. If that was my imagination then, I would be heading to my death right now."

"……Shidou...Don't tell me you plan to..."

And—by the time Kotori was saying that, the building that was floating on the sky was cut into pieces by Tohka, it became fragments of concretes and fell to the ground below.

Immediately, the AST members in the surrounding area, changed their targets to Tohka, and floated to the sky.

With that distraction, the <Sandalphon> that Shidou was riding on, managed to reach the base of Yoshino's barrier.

Or perhaps—with an overly excess vigor, the pointed end of the throne thrust into the barrier.

"Eek……!?"

Gakun a strong trembling attacked Shidou.

But, he could not remain surprised for long. The part which <Sandalphon>touched when it touched the barrier, while an incredibly high pitched shriek was sounding, it was getting frozen too.

It definitely, must have reacted to <Sandalphon>'s Mana.

"This is bad……"

When Shidou got off <Sandalphon> in a panic, he was standing right in front of the massive blizzard in the shape of a whirlpool.

It was a barrier of raging ice storms. When he saw it right in front of him, the intensity of it was a huge difference.

"Yoshino—is inside this."

After mumbling, he moved the puppet from his pocket to his clothes.

He then bent his body forward to cover it—and Shidou took one step forward.

"Shidou, please stop. What are you planning to do?"

From his right ear, restraining words entered. But Shidou did not stop his legs.

"—Uh, are you planning to enter the barrier with just your body? And only by depending on your recovery powers? It’s too reckless. Stop it!"

From those admirable words that make him think that it was not from the Commander mode, Shidou made a dry laugh.

"Oi oi……During the time I was shot, I heard that you weren't even a little agitated you know?"

"The situation at that time was different. In the area where the blizzard is blowing in, the outer circumference of the internal barrier is 5 meters from the target. It's 5 meters you understand? In that distance, it's like advancing while getting shot by a shotgun, you get it? And what's more, if Mana is detected inside that radius, you will be frozen like Tohka's <Sandalphon>"

And going on and on, Kotori continued talking.

"Do you understand what I am saying? I am saying during the time you are in the outer edge of the barrier, your wounds will not heal. The difference is huge compared to being shot by one bullet. If your ability runs out half way, there is no mistake you will die!?"

"……Mana— So my recovery abilities, is the powers of a Spirit huh?"

"……Uh."

He heard the sound of Kotori choking.

But, Shidou did not stop his legs.

It was understandable that this was a stupid move, but he could not stop.

That's because Shidou made a promise.

That he will save Yoshino. And he himself—will become Yoshino's hero.

After taking a deep breath, he took a step inside the barrier.

"Shidou—! Shidou! Stop!"

Kotori unusually started shouting desperately.

"—Stop……..uh, Onii-cha—"

But reaching at the end of the voice, in Shidou's ear, he could only hear the sound of the violent blizzard.

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Part 6

"U, e…….., e……uh."

In the center of the barrier, Yoshino was squatting on the back of <Zadkiel>, and was crying.

It a very quiet area that one would not think to be inside a raging blizzard. Only the sound of Yoshino's weeping and sniffling could be heard reverberating loudly.

She was very scared and could not go outside. But, over here—was quite, lonely.

"Yo…shi…non……uh……"

With a voice filled with tears, she called the name of her friend.

"Y.E.S."

"……!?"

Yoshino twitched her shoulders in surprise, and immediately raised her head and looked around.

"——!"

And then, Yoshino wiped her tears and opened her eyes wide.

That's because right at the border of the outer edge and the inner part of the barrier, she caught sight of a puppet she was familiar with.

"!, Yoshinon……!?"

Yoshino shouted and jumped off <Zadkiel>'s back, and ran to that spot.

There was no way Yoshino could have made a mistake.

That puppet was unmistakably Yoshino's friend [Yoshinon], which had been missing for the past few days.

But—

"……Hii……!"

Thud!.

From behind [Yoshinon], someone fell inside and Yoshino instinctively stopped her legs.

No—accurately speaking, the person who fell inside was the one wearing [Yoshinon] on their hand.

She could not tell who it was by the appearance.

That was because the person who fell down had his whole body covered in blood stains and injuries.

"Uh……"

That person must have forcibly entered Yoshino's barrier. From the body that fell down, a large amount of blood flowed out into the area around him.

Yoshino's eyes were sure of it. This was, instead of describing it as a human, much closer to a corpse.

But immediately Yoshino no longer needed to examine the body.

That was because---suddenly, the body she thought was half-dead, started glowing. It was like the numerous wounds made on the body were getting licked by flames that were crawling on their surface.

While Yoshino was dumbfounded, the person's injuries vanished.

And—finally the facial features could be grasped.

"……!? Shidou-sa……"

Yoshino let out a voice filled in shock.

Yes, that worn-out human was Itsuka Shidou.

Shidou rolled and, when he faced upwards on that spot, *fuuuuuuu*……He let out a deep breath.

"I……I thought I was going to die…"

Shidou, who barely made it inside the barrier, took in big breaths. And after his heart, which was about to stop, calmed down, he slowly raised his body up.

Even though the outer part of the barrier was a machine-gun-like furious snowstorm, the inside of it was really quiet. It was an area that had nothing weird in it. It somehow reminded him of the inside of an igloo.

And then right inside it, there was a giant doll and a girl with eyes like a rabbits' which were dyed red.

"—Yoshino!"

When Shidou called her, he stood up while carrying the rabbit puppet.

"As promised, I—came to save you……!"

When he did that, after Yoshino stared blankly,

"U,e,eeeeeeeee……"

The tears in her eyes accumulated and she started crying.

"Uwah……..,wai— D-Don't cry. Di-Did I somehow do something bad……..?"

Shidou hastily moved his hands, but Yoshino swung her head sideways.

"You're……. Wrong, I am…….happy…… you……..came……..."

After she said that, [Ueeeeee…….] she started crying again.

While Shidou made a wry laugh at that appearance, he used his right hand and gently patted Yoshino's head.

And then, with the puppet that was put on his left hand, *clatter* *clatter*, he tried moving it.

"Ya-ha-, long time no see. Have you been doing great?"

He was mumbling his mouth while speaking to make it look like it was ventriloquism.

Although it was an act that was poorly executed, Yoshino happily swung her head many times to the front.

If you were to think normally, it might be a weird scene.

That was because, [Yoshinon] is a doll that moves by Yoshino's ventriloquism.

But—

Shidou remembered what Reine said a while ago.

"……From the results of the investigation, regarding the current Spirit class we are monitoring, we found out there was one more small and unusual reading hidden there."

"Errr……which means—?"

"……It essentially means that there is another personality existing inside Yoshino that only appears when she wears the puppet."

"!, Tha-That means……Yoshino knows that about herself too?"

"……Maybe so, maybe not. But there is one thing for certain, the person that you were having a conversation with in the department store, instead of it being Yoshino, was the other personality that appeared through the medium of the puppet. Yoshino at that time will leave all the interactions to Yoshinon and is close to a state where she purposely closes her heart. That is the reason why her powers were not sealed even though she was kissed."

"……"

"……There is one more thing. Regarding the reason why Yoshinon appears, there is something very interesting about it."

"Something interesting?"

"……Aah, there are many reasons why she gave birth to a new personality other than the one she already had but—the most popular was to probably run away from things like ill-treatment, strong agony or stress. In short, the reason she accidentally made another personality was to make it as if someone else were taking

on the painful experiences instead of herself."

"So that means……that was expected, it was painful that the AST was aiming for her life—?"

"…….Noo. —This is quite hard to believe but this girl, in order to avoid injuring humans instead of herself, probably gave birth to a new personality in order to restrain her own powers”

"——Uh."

"…….Shin. Please, you definitely have to save that girl. You would be lying……if you do not want to go save this kind and gentle little girl."

—At that conversation.

"……"

"Than...k …….you, very much."

And, unexpectedly, Yoshino lowered her head.

"Eh?"

"…….For, saving, Yoshinon."

After Shidou scratched his cheek, [aah] he nodded.

"The next one—Yoshino. I am going to save you."

"Eh…….?"

Yoshino replied back curiously. Shidou then went on his knees to look Yoshino in the eyes.

He could not hear anything from the intercam. It must have gotten broken while he was passing through the barrier.

It was painful not to know what Yoshino's mental states were but there was no choice.

Either way, he had to do it.

The contact with Yoshino when she lost her puppet and the conversation he just had.

In only those times, he believed that he gained the minimum requirements for Yoshino's trust.

"—Errr, about that, Yoshino. In order to save you—errm, there is one thing that you have to do."

"What……is it?"

While Shidou let his saliva flow down his throat which was dry from the nervousness, he continued his words.

"……Errm, don't think of me as a weird guy please ……Do you still remember about the kiss?"

In an instant Yoshino made a blank face, and immediately swung her head vertically.

"……Uh, I, I see. Errrr——ermm…..in order to save you, you will have to do it……No, I really don't mean it in a weird way! This is—"

And—

"—Eh?"

And Shidou's voice stopped there.

The reason was simple—Yoshino abruptly closed her eyes.

And on Shidou's lips *Chu*, she gave him a kiss.

At that moment, Shidou was attacked by a...somehow warm feeling flowing into his body,

"…….!? Yo-Yoshino……?"

"……?"

Yoshino tilted her head to the side a little.

"Did……I do...it wrong……?"

"N-No……you're not wrong…….but..."

When Shidou said that, Yoshino nodded in consent.

"If it is what……..Shidou-san says, I will believe it."

At that moment—<Zadkiel>, that was standing idly behind Yoshino and the inner dress that was covering her, turned into light particles and melted into the atmosphere.

And then……the blizzard barrier surrounding Yoshino and Shidou, suddenly lost its energy and disappeared.

Yoshino's shoulders twitched in surprise.

"……, Shidou,san…….this—"

Yoshino was in a state where she had no idea what was going on, so her eyes spun around and around. And in order to cover her half-naked appearance, she crouched down.

Somehow when she made that kind of reaction, Shidou started to get embarrassed again as well.

"Ah……aah, un, errr……I think you have a lot of things you want to say! Bu-But for right now—"

And—at that moment.

"Un……"

Yoshino squinted her eyes from the brightness. After the clouds cleared up—the sunlight was, pouring in.

"It's warm—"

It was as if it was the first time for Yoshino to see the sun, she was in admiration.

No, it really might be her first time seeing it.

Shidou recalled back. He does not know whether it is Yoshino's nature to control water and cold air, but it felt like every time when she appeared in this world, rain was always falling.

"Pre~tty."

She dazedly, mumbled.

Yoshino said that while looking at the sky.

Shidou also, got attracted to it and raised his face.

And then, he immediately found what Yoshino was staring at.

In the sky that was erased from the gray colored clouds—there was a magnificent rainbow, spanning through it.

—But, that aftertaste did not last for very long. Unexpectedly both Shidou and Yoshino bodies were covered with a mysterious floating feeling.

"Nowah……!"

"…….!?"

There was a memory about this feeling. It was <Fraxinus>'s transport device.

Kotori must have, retrieved them after confirming the sealing was completed.

"……and."

After a moment, Shidou's view was no longer of the city covered in ice, but instead it was the ship's interior of <Fraxinus> he was used to seeing.

"…….!? ……!?"

As expected Yoshino was blinking in surprise.

And—Shidou turned to the other presence that appeared at that area.

"Ooo…….so you are safe, shidou."

Over there was—Tohka standing with her Raizen high school uniform which was burnt in some places. It would seem that, together with Shidou and Yoshino, Tohka who had been in the middle of a battle was also retrieved.

"Tohka—! Ar-Are you okay!?"

The moment Shidou said that, Tohka made a sigh—the hand that was holding the sword and the light membranes that appeared on her body important parts, disappeared into thin air.

"Umu. It's not a big deal……instead of that, isn't your condition much more worse?"

"Ah……"

Having that pointed out; Shidou scratched the back of his head.

Shidou's clothes right now were dyed red with his own blood, and incidentally it was also filled with holes.

"Hii……"

And, Yoshino raised a scared voice, and hid behind Shidou's shadow.

It would seem that she was still not good with Tohka. Shidou unintentionally made a dry laugh.

"It's okay Yoshino. This girl is Tohka. She was with me—when we went to save you."

When Shidou said that, Yoshino timidly brought her eyes to Tohka's face.

"Toh...ka……san."

"……nu."

After Tohka saw Yoshino with a complicated expression, [umu] she then made a small nod.

"Hmm……?"

And, Shidou eyebrows frowned.

Coming from the corridor, loud footsteps were echoing.

Then the door of the transporter room opened, and Kotori entered with her breathing roughly.

"Ko-Kotori……?"

After Shidou mouthed his surprise at the sudden intrusion, Kotori stared at Shidou's whole body as if she was examining it.

And then,

"You—stupid brother……!"

"Higuuh…….!?"

Kotori held her fist aloft with all her strength and, let out a strong punch at Shidou's solar plexus.

What's more, a miraculous twist was also added to the punch. It was an excellent cork screw.

"Guhaa……Wha……what the heck are you doing!?"

"Doing something so stupid……! You should only listen to what I say!"

"Uh? What are you—?"

Shidou wanted to raise an accusing voice but—he was stopped half-way through.

The reason is simple. It was because the sister that had just released a punch was now, pressing her face into Shidou's chest, and putting her arms around his body just like that, *Gyuu*, she inserted strength into her arms.

"……You have to properly, make proper calculations on the recovery limit beforehand……..! And move accordingly to what I say, it will definitely be safer……"

"Koto…ri……"

Shidou exhaled, and patted Kotori's head.

"Sorry, for doing something rash."



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"……You seriously were thoughtless. Even an amoeba is more prudent. You half-celled creature."

While Kotori was still pushing her face into his chest, *Blow*! And she blew her nose, and finally let go of his body.

Shidou whose chest part of his shirt was smeared with snot, was scratching his cheeks while making a wry smile.

However, Kotori was showing that she wasn't bothered about that. Speaking of which—the moment her face left Shidou's chest, her usual addressing method of the cold-tongued Commander mode returned.

"—Seriously, moving as you like……All of you are getting examined from head to the toe. So follow me."

She said that and *Pui* turned her head away, and left through the corridor.

"Haha……"

After Shidou made a powerless laugh, he then turned his face towards Yoshino and Tohka.

"Okay……well then, let's go……Hmm……?"

He wondered why, Tohka looked at Shidou with an unhappy face.

"Tohka……? Is something wrong?"

"!, No-Nothing! Hurry up and let's go!"

When she said that, Tohka walked heavily.

"What's wrong…….with her?"

After saying that, Shidou, moved his legs together with Yoshino and chased after Tohka's back.

Epilogue: The Past that Starts to take Action

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Part 1

"Wha……What the hell is thisssssssssssssss!"

It had been two days since Yoshino's powers were sealed.

With the examinations done, Shidou and Tohka were finally allowed to return back home. On that day, when he woke up in the morning, right beside the Itsuka residence, something like an apartment building was standing there.

On the land that was vacant just two days ago, suddenly *Don*, it's there.

It was like getting tricked by a fox or a raccoon.

"What……didn't I tell you before? We were making a special residence just for the Spirit's use."

And, from behind, the sleepy Kotori said that while rubbing her eyes.

"……! Don't tell me this is the one you were talking about……?"

"Yes. Although it looks like a normal apartment, the physical toughness is a hundred times greater than normal, since the Realizer is also working, mana resistance is also perfect. If there is a little violence, nothing abnormal will leak out."

"No, that is not what I was asking about……! When on earth did this thing get built……! This is impossible to build in just 1 or 2 days!"

"Well. Even the JGSDF's disaster reconstruction team, can fix a destroyed building in just one night too."

"Wha……?"

It seemed to be true after being told that. It must be the effects made by the Realizer something.

"……Which means, that the information about the residence being built soon, was just a big play on words."

"Don't speak badly of others. I told you before that this is a trial period for Tohka

living outside."

"……Nu."

There were a lot of things he couldn't swallow, but it was useless to continue fighting back with her.

Kotori turned around, and walked in the direction of the house.

"—So with that reason, Tohka will be made to live next door starting tomorrow. I already told Tohka. She should be packing up her belongings now?"

"Ah, aah……I, see. I guess so……"

Shidou scratched his cheeks.

Well, she was going to be living here until the residential area was done in the first place, and Shidou's mental health would finally become stable because of this but……when the day finally came, it was not like he wouldn't feel a little lonely.

"Ara what is it Shidou? Do you want to live with Tohka longer?"

"!, No, tha-that really isn't the case……"

Shidou denied in panic, but Kotori only shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, if you want to make some kind of mistake, your final chance to do it is around today or tomorrow."

"Wha……what the heck are you saying……!"

"Sca~ary. Retreat retreat."

While Shidou was yelling with a red face, Kotori hopped and entered the house.

"……Seriously, that Kotori."

Shidou scratched his head in relief and sighed before putting a foot into the house.

And—

"Un……?"

Shidou unexpectedly raised his eyebrows.

There was a little girl wearing a cute one piece, and on her head a casket that was covering her face, she ran out like she was hopping and approached him.

"! Yoshino!?"

Shidou called the little girl's name. The AstralDress was not covering her body but —there was no mistake.

Either way, it was because there was a rabbit puppet being worn on the little girl's left hand.

"Ya-Ha, Shidou-kun."

While the puppet *clatter* *clatter* was moving its mouth, a high pitched voice echoed.

"I-I finally met you. Sorry I didn't say thanks about saving me before."

"Ah, no……that's okay. What are you doing here? Are the examinations all over?"

"Un—, it's only the first examination. Although there are more, I told them I wanted to say thanks to Shidou-kun. So I was given special permission to go outside a little."

After saying that, the puppet was looking up at the sky as if it was looking at <Fraxinus>.

"Well, with that explained, if the examinations are all done lets go on a date again okay?"

"Ah, aah……okay."

"Fufu, well then, see you next time."

The puppet swung its small hands.

Thus, Yoshino twitched and swings her shoulders, and hesitantly faced towards Shidou's direction.

"Un……..? What's wrong?"

"——Ah, er……"

And, when Shidou heard that voice his shoulders sprung up.

That was not [Yoshinon] but instead it was, unmistakably Yoshino's natural voice.

"Is it……okay, if I come over……and play……again…….?"

With that said, she timidly glanced in Shidou's direction.

"O…….ou, come whenever you like!"

When Shidou replied with that, Yoshino's face brightened and she lowered her head, then ran away.

"Fufu, great great. You worked hard."

"……Un."

Such a conversation was being exchanged with the puppet.

"……haha."

Shidou made a small sigh and the end of his lips formed a smile.

Speaking of which, it might be the first time [Yoshino] was talking under the condition of the puppet being put on.

Although he did not know the reason why……he was a little happy.

"Well then……"

After taking a light stretch, he then entered the house.

He ascended the stairs, and when he was about to enter his room, Shidou heard a soft voice.

The door of the guest room located deep inside the corridor opened slowly, and from there, half of Tohka's face was peeking out and looking in Shidou's direction.

"……Wha-What is it?"

"……"

Shidou said that while making his eyebrows approach close together, and Tohka, while being silent, put her hand out from the gap of the door, *swish* *swish* she made a hand signal to come over.

"Are you saying come over here?"

"……"

Tohka, then nodded. And then just like that, she sank back inside the room.

"Err……"

After a bewildered expression floated on Shidou's face for a while, he slowly took his time and walked over.

And then *knock* *knock* he knocked just in case, before opening the door.

Tohka was at the right hand side of the room—and was standing in front of the shelves placed close to the wall. In order to face each other, he continued walking until he was in the middle of the room.

"Is there something wrong? Tohka?"

When Shidou asked her, Tohka bit her lips a little and then raised her face.

"……Un. You might have already heard this from Kotori but, starting from tomorrow, it is decided that I will be staying next door."

"Ah, aah……looks like it."

"So……umm, there is something I want to have a talk about with shidou, while I still can."

"Talk?"

"……Umu."

It was like Tohka had something hard to say, so she delicately turned her gaze away.

"Yesterday, during the examination, I heard a lot from...Kotori and Reine."

"——! Errrrrrr……by a lot you mean……?"

"Un……it was about Kotori and the others, how they are trying to save us, the Spirits……and shidou who is helping them with it."

After Tohka took a deep breath to slow her heartbeat, she fixed her gaze back to Shidou.

"The talk I was referring to, is connected to that. —shidou. I beg you. From now on, if there are Spirits like me and Yoshino who appear, I want you to definitely save them."

"Eh……?"

Shidou opened his eyes wide.

"From what Kotori said, it seems that there are a number of Spirits that are still not confirmed. Among them, there should be some like me, those who do not want to fight but are still dragged into it— that kind of thing, is just pitiful."

Tohka said that, while making a somewhat sad smile.

"That's why please. Using shidou's power, please save those Spirits. ……Just like that time, when you saved me."

"……"

Shidou swallowed his saliva and, looked at Tohka again.

"……Err, how I would put it? Ummm……"

Kon Shidou hit his forehead.

Because of Tohka and Yoshino's affair, he should have made up his mind, but for some reason he was hesitant in wanting to put it into words. Shidou shook his head a little before opening his mouth.

"—Aah. I plan on doing so."

"……"

Although Tohka had gained the answer she had wished for, for some reason she was smiling with a complicated face.

"Un……I'm in your debt. There……is one more thing, is it okay?"

"Yeah, what is it? Try saying it."

"Un……"

And, while Tohka was mumbling something and moving her mouth, she immediately cast her face downwards.

"Eh? What did you say?"

She looked like she had said something but—he couldn't hear it.

While Shidou was trying to hear more clearly he took a step towards Tohka and—

"……Uh!?"

He approached Tohka who had quickly raised her face, and immediately shortened his breath.

Tohka put her arms around Shidou's neck, and pushed Shidou onto the nearby bed just like that.

And then—

"Unguuu……!?"

At that moment, after she showed something like she was hesitating, Tohka, slowly joined her lips and Shidou's together.

From the sudden act, his brain fell into disorder and screamed.

He was thinking he was still inside his dream or something; if that was the case, *what kind of metaphor is in this dream Freud-sensei* or something like that; he was rushed with unavoidable thoughts in an instant.

But, without the help of pinching his cheeks to confirm if it was reality, the deployed sensory organs in Shidou's whole body were continuously telling him that, THIS IS REALITY!

The exclusive sweet fragrance that only girls had was tickling his nasal cavity. Tohka's facial features were right in front of him. The comfortable weight leaning against his whole body. And the soft limbs that made him instinctively want to embrace them.

Furthermore—the sensation of the lips that can't be described with words and the taste of liquid fluids that does not belong to him.

With all of that mixed together, the joint sensations trampled all of Shidou's brain cells.

Unable to resist or adapt to the situation, 10 seconds passed.

"Puhaaa……"

It would seem that during the kiss, she has stopped breathing. As if she was attempting to take a breather, Tohka exhaled.

And while still taking a mount position, she stared at Shidou's eyes.

"To-Tohka……what did you……?"

When Shidou said that, Tohka's continued on with her sight unchanged and still in the same place.

"……I'll take this as my repayment for this time."

"Eh……?"

Shidou made a flat voice and replied, and Tohka turned her eyes away in embarrassment.

"……I wonder why. It's just an act of lips touching together……but it doesn't feel bad. And mysteriously—I don't want to do it with any humans other than shidou. ……together with that……I don't know if this is correct or wrong but…… when shidou……err, was inside the building or something and was kissing with Yoshino, how can I put this……I had a bad feeling."

While Shidou was still unresponsive, Tohka continued talking while embarrassed.

"……That's why. Err, regarding about that……don't do it, with anyone else, anymore."

"……Eh? Errrr—"

It would seem that Tohka was not told what method was used to seal the Spirit's power. What a self-contradicting request. The request she was demanding was

something impossible.

"Reply!"

"Y……Yes.”

But Shidou was overpowered by Tohka, and accidentally agreed with her.

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Part 2

Right now in the briefing room located at one corner of the JGSDF Tenguu city garrison, combat-personnel and non-combat personnel were lined up in a row.

The report session of the operation few days ago, as well as for the strategic meeting for the new Spirit reading that was observed in the neighborhood, all of this was collected because of Ryouko's order.

"……"

Inside of that, the JGSDF member Origami was in her normal appearance and while being silent, as if to suppress her displeased mind, she was staring at her hand placed on top of the table.

—2 days ago

Because of [Princess]'s obstruction, [Hermit] managed to escape in the end.

In addition, the [Princess]'s figure, also suddenly disappeared during the middle of the battle.

What's more—it was a different reading from what was usually left behind when she went Lost.

Although all of the members that were frozen together with their Territory by [Hermit] were safe but……Even if the AST did defeat the Spirit in the end, they were not given any large accomplishments, and the only thing left to do was just to return back to base.

It was only normal to be in a foul mood.

Furthermore, she still did not know whether Shidou who was supposed to be in Origami's house, went to the city when the alarm was ringing or not—incidentally, for some reason the puppet that she picked up a few days ago, had also disappeared from her house……She was a little fond of it though.

Of course, it was not like she doubted Shidou.

Instead of that, by any chance if Shidou did steal Origami's personal belongings, it

is a good thing in its own way; Origami planned not to make any further questions regarding this.

And—at that moment, the room door opened, Ryouko who was the AST captain showed her face.

All of the members in the briefing room stood up all at once, and saluted.

"Ah— it's okay. Sit down, sit down."

When Ryouko said that annoyed, she stood in front of everyone.

"Now then, I guess everyone is assembled. —Well then, I was planning to immediately start with the meeting but……before that. While everyone is happy I have terrible news."

"……?"

When the members made curious faces, *Sigh* Ryouko sighed.

"……Since the appearance of Spirits in Tenguu city is large, and we are in the position of needing to provide more results. Additional personnel has been assigned to join us."

"Additional personnel……is it?"

"Yeah. A very energetic top ace. In terms of using the Realizer, it is not surprising that she is in the top 5 in the world. —In fact, it would seems that she has killed a Spirit alone."

"……!?"

From Ryouko's words, the members started getting noisy.

That was only normal. It takes 10 elite members to go against a Spirit that was beyond one's capacity, and that one person took on a Spirit all alone.

Getting the responses that Ryouko predicted, she shrugged her shoulders, and then looked to the door which she entered from a while ago.

"—Enter."

"Yes."

As if to reply back to Ryouko's voice, a cute sound echoed.

And then the door opened once again—and one girl walked into the room.

"……!?"

In an instant, all the lined up AST members in the briefing room, raised their eyebrows all at once.

But, that was normal. That was because the person that entered, was a girl that no matter how you look at her was a middle-school student.

She had an intelligent face, and a ponytail tied at the back of her head. She was a characteristic girl with a black mole right under her left eye.

"……"

Origami, twitched and moved her shoulders. —On that girl's face, she felt like she saw it somewhere before.

"I am second lieutenant Takamiya Mana, please to make your acquaintance from now on."

Mana turned around with a JGSDF uniform that looks like a cosplay item, and then saluted.

"First Lieutenant Kusakabe…….who is she?"

A member, threw a question to Ryouko.

Ryouko [This question came as predicted haa……] made such a face and opened her mouth.

"I told you just now right. It's the Top Ace-sama I spoke of earlier."

"Haaa…….!?"

All of the members frowned together all at once.

Mana tilted her head wondering what was up with everyone's reaction.

"Is there anything wrong?"

She said that, with normal respect to everyone.

"What do mean by what's wrong?……Y-You...aren't you still a kid—!?"

When one member said that, Mana *Fuuu* exhaled.

"I don't think there are any problems with that. It is not related to this and a person's age is just an individual's characteristic. —Or is there one amongst you that can defeat me?"

Mana said that, and it's not like she was using sarcasm, but she was just stating the truth.

"Wha……?"

That member who asked was staring in astonishment, due to the fact that she did not predict that she would get such a reply back.

"Looks to me, among those here—"

And, Mana set her gaze in Origami's direction.

"—it should be around your level. Although the percentage is low but you look like you have a chance."

"……"

Origami did not reply back, and silently faced back.

When she did that, Ryouko *Pokan* hit Mana's head lightly.

"Quit your useless babbling. I'm going to be showing the images from the day before yesterday, so hurry up and sit somewhere vacant."

"Yes."

Mana replied with that short sentence, and with beautiful footwork, she went and sat beside Origami.

"Well then……"

And, when Ryouko operated the buttons near the wall, a screen descended from the ceiling, and the room's lightings dimmed. She then operated the terminal on her

hand, and immediately, the image of the battle conditions from 2 days appeared.

The images of when Origami was trying to break the barrier [Hermit] constructed was shown on the screen—

"—an interference, entered here."

The same time when Ryouko said that with an irritated voice, [Princess]'s figure was shown on the screen.

Ryouko, made the screen zoom in—and in front of the barrier, there was one boy confirmed standing in front of it.

Origami gasped a little. There was no mistake. That was—Shidou.

And,

"……Uh."

Mana sitting beside her suddenly clutched her head, and made a small groan.

For a while Mana used her hands and pressed the side of her head as if to suppress a headache but—she immediately raised her face, *gataa* and the sound of her standing up was heard.

"Hmm……? What is it? Something wrong?"

Ryouko said it with a doubtful voice.

But Mana didn't reply and, stared at Shidou being shown on the screen, she then opened her mouth.

"—Onii-sama?"

"……?"

Origami frowned, and looked at the side of Mana's face.

And then—she realized the true face of the weird feeling she just had.

That girl, gave off the same atmosphere, as that of Itsuka Shidou.

Afterword

Long time no see its Tachibana Koushi here.

If you bought the 2nd volume and ignored the 1st, and if you used this rare and unusual method do so, then nice to meet you I am Tachibana Koushi. If you bought volume 1 and 2 together and have just read the afterwords of Volume 1 a moment ago, then nice to meet you again it's Tachibana Koushi which is smiling daringly while tilting a glass.

How did you like the [Date A Live 2 Yoshino Puppet]? .I would feel happy if you enjoyed it.

The Heroine we are going to be talking about this time would be the second Spirit Yoshino.

Although this character's name took a lot of tries but, it felt like Yoshino's name was picked relatively easy without any difficulties. On the contrary Shidou and Reine's have nice complications in it, a little before when the completed manuscript reached the name Tohka, I accidentally wrote hers as [000]. What is up with that broadcast banned Heroine.

But this Yoshino, during the design explanation from my supervisor, [I see, it feels like she is a jungle girl] I was told that and [!?] I became like that.

"Jungle girl"

……Hmm? That is Yoshino's image before it has been changed. Her image was something like a muscular Amazoness type of some sort. she would be a Japanese-style Amazoness and the name, would feel like [Yushinuo Lelebul Pocahontas]. They were afraid of the rival tribes [Crazy storm], and would also be the type of roughnecks that would be the ones that go on a rampage in the forest. Their favorite food is raw meat.

And, when I was in the biggest misunderstand, I was informed that the [Jungle girl]

was suppose to be a [Fairy-like female that lives in a forest].

Eeeh----even If I was unwilling give up, but that was like getting sniped by someone lurking inside a thicket with camouflage clothings.

And, over here there is an announcement I would like to make.

According to the next prediction, [Date A Live 3] will be the next one to be published.

And it was planned that [Soukyuu no Karma 8] would be published after that. To the readers that are reading the [Karma], it would be helpful if you were to wait a little more.

To the people of, *I never read [Karma] before!* then please use this chance to read it.

Addition to that, it would seem that the comic for [Date A Live] has been decided. YaHoi!.

For more detail information's will, please wait a little longer.

Well then this time too, thanks to various methods and efforts that this book was created. Of course the illustrator supervisor Tsunako-san, and the design supervisor, thank you for the first- class work each time you all assisted me with. I have been under your care seriously.

The next one. In [Date A Live 3], unlike Tohka and Yoshino, it was planned that a evil Spirit will be entering the stage. It would make me happy if you are looking for it.

Now then, I pray that we would be able meet again.

Tachibana Koushi

Translation Notes and References

Chapter 1:

1. ↑ A suicidal attack used in the World War, where airplanes crashes into the enemy, also known as God Wind
2. ↑ is a form of cloth headgear that covers the whole head, exposing only part of the face. Usually only the eyes or both eyes and mouth are left exposed.
3. ↑ toy from Fukushima prefecture in the shape of a red cow, also used as a talisman against smallpox

Chapter 2:

1. ↑ A Japanese homemade lunch usually in a small open lid box that contains rice and multiple side dishes.
2. ↑ A comedic way to talk back to someone
3. ↑ Is a type of Japanese video game centered on interactions with attractive anime-styled girls. These games are a sub-genre of dating sims usually targeting towards male audience
4. ↑ Territory - sphere of influence created by the CR-unit, allowing their imagination to become reality
5. ↑ Lost - term given when a Spirit returns to the other dimension
6. ↑ Chihuahua - a small breed of dog.

Chapter 3:

1. ↑ a pose done by having the arms moving up and down parallel
2. ↑ A bowl of rice topped with eggs and chicken http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oyakodon
3. ↑ meaning something along the lines of "I will humbly receive." It is customary in Japanese culture to say this before every meal.

Chapter 4:

1. ↑ A Japanese way of saying "let’s begin eating" used as manners in Japan
2. ↑ A Trick performed in the Yu-Gi-Oh series when the player would flip a trap card. In this case it would be, Origami using one of the tricks under her sleeves

Chapter 5:

1. ↑ Birdlime is an adhesive substance used in trapping birds http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birdlime

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